Routledge Studies in Nineteenth-Century Philosophy

HEGEL'S ENCYCLOPEDIC SYSTEM

Edited by
Sebastian Stein and Joshua Wretzel

Hegel's Encyclopedic System

This book discusses the most comprehensive of Hegel's works: his long-neglected *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Outline*. It contains original essays by internationally renowned and emerging voices in Hegel scholarship. Their contributions elucidate fundamental aspects of Hegel's encyclopedic system with an eye to its contemporary relevance. The book thus addresses *system-level* claims about Hegel's unique conceptions of philosophy, philosophical 'science' and its method, dialectic, speculative thinking and the way they relate to both Hegelian and contemporary notions of nature, history, religion, freedom and cultural praxis.

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Edited by Sebastian Stein and
Joshua Wretzel

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We would like to dedicate this volume to Professor Doctor Jens Halfwassen who tragically passed away in 2020 and who is dearly missed by all who had the privilege to know and learn from him.

'[D]aß das Eine jenseits jeder Erkenntnis ist, ist selber eine begründbare Erkenntnis; zugleich aber vollzieht diese Einsicht ein sinnvolles Scheitern des argumentierenden, dialektischen Denkens, das durch die Aufhebung aller Denkbarkeit die Ekstasis vorbereitet, so daß alles Philosophieren über das Eine zuletzt ein "Aufwecken aus den Begriffen zur Schau" (VI 9, 4, 13–14) ist.'[1]

1 Jens Halfwassen (2006), *Der Aufstieg zum Einen*, München: KG Saur, p. 16.

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1 Introduction

Sebastian Stein and Joshua Wretzel

In May of 1817, Hegel published a version of his philosophical system in outline form, as a guide for students to follow his lectures. Titled *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Outline*, Hegel thought that this work most fully articulated the methodical system of his thinking, and in the preface, he expressed the hope that its method would eventually 'be recognized […] as the only genuine one.' With characteristic boldness, he suggests that his encyclopedic enterprise contains the solution to all major – indeed, all *possible* – philosophical problems. Thus, he believes one may find within the pages of this text both a 'knowledge of the unconditioned truth' and the basis of an outlook on life that 'alone gives human beings their dignity.'

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Hegel's optimism about his system has not been borne out by those following in his wake. Despite Hegel's claims about the centrality of the *Encyclopedia* system to grasping the structure and content of (his) philosophical thought, both critics and supporters of Hegel largely devote their efforts to one of his other main publications: the Jena *Phenomenology of Spirit*, the Nuremberg *Science of Logic*, or the Heidelberg/Berlin *Philosophy of Right*. However, since Hegel argued that these works only become intelligible as introduction to the encyclopedic system or as parts of it, it is questionable whether, in the long history of Hegel commentary, one has understood him on the terms he wishes to be understood.

What is more, even Hegel's advocates tend to operate under an anti-Hegelian historiographical presupposition. For they believe that both the practice and the context of philosophy has fundamentally changed since Hegel's time, and so, if Hegel is to be made relevant, he stands in need of an update of sorts: Hegel is often thought of as writing for a 19th-century, European audience, whereas most philosophers today aspire to write for a broader, global audience. Given further advances in politics and the sciences, it might seem naive to think that Hegel, on his own terms, would be relevant for a contemporary audience. What some think we need is, to paraphrase one of Hegel's more prominent supporters, 'the best approach to Hegel for us,' where this means appropriating those parts of Hegel that are relevant for a contemporary audience, while dispensing with the rest.

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But it is, at least initially, unclear who this 'us' refers to as somehow different from the 19th-century 'them.' For all of our scientific and technological progress, 'we' are still vulnerable to empirical and philosophical error, corrupt government, vast imbalances of power and the most doltish forms of populist politics. The politicization of the word 'freedom' at the turn of the century, together with more recent assertions of individual liberty for what might be the wrong reasons, shows that we may not be as well-situated as we might like to think when it comes to grasping the ultimate reality of things that Hegel set out to describe. It is at least unclear, that is, whether the things that make philosophy relevant 'for us' are all that much different than the things that made philosophy relevant for Hegel.

Hegel's rather eloquent way of putting the point is to say that 'the content' of philosophy 'remains eternally young.' Philosophers have, as their subject matter, something that is not subject to the change of socio-historical circumstances but greets every new generation of thinkers as the same truth. Thus, while historical circumstances may give certain philosophical questions more or less urgency, they do not change the fundamental nature of the struggle for knowing the truth itself. Every generation faces the same questions about what thought and nature are, and what it means to be human; and each generation grapples with their own ultimate purposes, wonders about the meaning of being in all its shapes. Thus, if the global reach of communication which defines our own age has changed anything for the philosopher, it is only a matter of scope: the kind of metaphysical restlessness, once thought to define only Western European life is visible, today, as a seemingly universal feature of the human condition.

Finding ourselves as we do in such circumstances, it is a shame that we continue to misunderstand and misuse a thinker with Hegel's might and vision, and not just because of the way Hegel can help us, but also for the ways that misappropriation of Hegel hurts us. For instance, thinkers have long placed Hegel alongside apologists for European colonialism. But those who do so fail to grasp, also, the notion of absolute knowing with which his most famous book, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, culminates. For it claims that that highest form of consciousness consists of the full embrace of the other in their full otherness, unconditioned by any sort of presupposition one might otherwise hold about their otherness. So understood, Hegel's view of the other is not the demand for conformity, reduction of the other to the same, typical of the colonialist mindset, it is rather the attitude that lets the other be full as the other, and is at home with oneself in the face of the other.

Given the continued misappropriation of Hegel, together with a contemporary socio-political situation that stands to benefit from his insights, the question arises of whether and to what extent Hegel's hope, that his philosophical method be recognized as the true method, can be realized in our time. These were the topics of stimulating, lunch-hour conversations in Heidelberg that led the editors and Roberto Vinco to organize a conference

on Hegel's work back in 2017. We agreed that the time was right, not only to ask the question of Hegel's contemporary relevance, but also to shed light on his arguably most neglected work – the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences* – which had its bicentennial in that year. We organized an international group of speakers for an intense, three-day conference titled 'The Enduring Relevance of Hegel's *Encyclopedia*.' This volume offers the papers that were presented at that conference.

Participants were asked to contribute papers on one of two topics: either to show how Hegel's *Encyclopedia*-system as a whole remains relevant for contemporary philosophical concerns, or to illuminate the enduring relevance of particular parts of the *Encyclopedia* project. We shall discuss each of these in turn.

1.1 On the *Encyclopedia*-System as a Whole

These essays were focused on one of two tasks: either to show how Hegel's *Encyclopedia*-system as a whole bears relevance to matters of contemporary interest, or else to contribute to the still-incomplete project of clarifying the *Encyclopedia*-system so that it may be understood on its own terms.

We begin our collection with Klaus Vieweg's study, 'The Conceptual and Biographical Genesis of Hegel's *Encyclopedia*.' He argues against the notion that the *Encyclopedia*-system was begun and thrown together upon Hegel's arrival in Heidelberg, but was in fact in development during his time in Nuremberg. Indeed, Vieweg shows that the sections on objective spirit, including subsections on abstract right, morality and ethical life were already outlined and presented to students and fellow philosophers during his Nuremberg years. And while the sections on aesthetics and philosophical psychology may not have been fully developed until his time in Heidelberg and Berlin, we find in his Nuremberg correspondence the main lines of his thoughts on the topic that remain remarkably consistent with both the Heidelberg and Berlin editions.

In 'Hegel's Heidelberg *Encyclopedia* as the Main Work of the Philosophy of Spirit,' the late Jens Halfwassen discusses the grounding of the *Encyclopedia*-system within the history of philosophy. While it is common to contextualize the *Encyclopedia* as a work in the post-Kantian, idealist tradition, Halfwassen shows how the proper structure for the system as a whole dates back to the work of Plotinus and Proklos. It is there, Halfwassen contends, that Hegel finds the notions that the threefold *Geist* is God in its highest form of self-development, that all reality and thought are to be understood as the self-comprehension of divine *Geist*, and that the proper method for philosophy as a whole is the speculative one.

Meanwhile, Luca Illetterati's 'Philosophy as Science of Freedom' examines the systematic implications of a particular passage from the *Encyclopedia*, namely, the *Anmerkung* to §5. There, Hegel writes that philosophy may be seen (*betrachtet*) as 'the science of freedom.' As Illetterati writes, this

is because in philosophy, thought learns to free itself from longing, fear and other 'external' impediments to its own self-development. From there, Illetterati proceeds to investigate some of the core theses of Hegel's *Encyclopedia*-system: the fundamental connection between system and freedom, the sense in which freedom grounds the necessity for the threefold split of the absolute idea and the fundamental connection between freedom and reason itself.

'Hegel's System and the Negativity of the Dialectic,' the piece by Anton Friedrich Koch, examines Adorno's famous claim that the negativity of the dialectic is in principle untamable. He examines Hegel's logic of the concept as the site of Hegel's 'response' to this notion, where negativity is brought to heel by the development of the concept into the absolute idea, and ultimately into nature and *Geist*. Koch argues that, while Hegel provides the case for the ultimate reconciliation between thought and being, it is hard to reject Adorno's emphases on the place of the finite individual within thought.

Roberto Vinco defends a theological conception of the idea in 'The *Encyclopedia*-System as a Form of Worship.' He understands both 'the idea' and 'worship' in a unique sense. As regards the former, Vinco treats the idea as the Platonic 'Veritative Being.' As regards the latter, Vinco takes worship to be the highest expression of leisure and contemplative life. So understood, philosophy is a form of worship in case its object is a form of divinity. Vinco thus undertakes to show that the idea, in its complete self-expression, is itself divine: it describes a universe in which every single element is an immediate expression of the divine origin, or a world in which God is all in all.

Hegel's metaphilosophy is the topic of Friedrike Schick's contribution, 'Between Religion and the Empirical Sciences: Hegel's Concept of Philosophy. While much has been written about Hegel's conceptions of philosophy and religion, and an increasing number of scholars have begun to study Hegel's conception of philosophy alongside that of the empirical sciences, Schick aptly observes that no one has, as of yet, viewed Hegel's conception of philosophy as standing between religion and the empirical sciences. Schick's point is that Hegel's conception of philosophy both points out, and helps to overcome, a false dilemma of Enlightenment-era thinking. While Enlightenment thinkers turned to empirical science to overcome the superstitions of dogmatic religion, Hegelian philosophy operates in a space that is neither dogmatic nor subject to the relativistic shortcomings of the empirical science as Hegel conceived them.

In his 'Temporal Strata of Historical Experience,' Chirstopher Yeomans defends an analogy he finds between Koselleck's thought and the structure of the *Encyclopedia*-system. Of particular interest, for Yeomans, is Koselleck's notion of *Zeitschichten*, or temporal strata, which he develops to account for both cyclical and linear elements of historical experience. Yeomans understands the 'circle-of-circles' structure of the *Encyclopedia* as similarly constructed out of *Zeitschichten*. In particular, he sees the split of

the *Encyclopedia*-system into logic, philosophy of nature and philosophy of spirit as mimicking the actual structure of our historical experience. On this view, history is structured, first, as pure conceptual form (logic); second, as temporality as such (nature); and third, as social institutions (spirit).

1.2 On Parts of the *Encyclopedia*-System

These essays aim to illuminate those parts of the *Encyclopedia* that bear relevance to matters of contemporary interest. The first of these is Michaela Bordignon's 'Hegel's *Logic* as a System of Illegitimate Totalities.' An illegitimate totality is, as she defines it, a set of all the elements that satisfy a determinate condition, while also containing itself as an element. In this sense, Russell's set of all sets that contain themselves is the paradigm case of an illegitimate totality. Bordignon's claim is that each of the determinations of the *Logic* – being, existence, appearance, etc. – constitutes an illegitimate totality. She uses this as a starting point from which to argue that Hegel defends a view of illegitimate totalities that is different – and ultimately superior – to Bertrand Russell's.

Hans-Georg Schülein sheds some much-needed light on a dark corner of Hegel's work: his *Philosophy of Nature*. Of particular interest to Schülein is how nature presents itself as a 'sphere of *otherness*' that simultaneously repels and attracts us. He argues that this 'otherness' of nature is, for Hegel, only nature's initial appearance; that Hegel's nature is a system of stages that continuously reduces nature's 'otherness' and that Hegel's philosophy of nature offers a teleological argument for the integration of nature in spirit. Schülein's paper thus provides a counterweight to prevailing, so-called 'anti-naturalist' interpretations of *Geist* in Hegel.

In 'The Two Souls: On the Difference Between Human and Animal Cognition in Hegel's *Philosophy of Spirit* and *Philosophy of Nature*,' Luca Corti addresses the double-usage of 'soul' ('*Seele*') in the *Encyclopedia*: once to describe animal subjectivity, once to describe human subjectivity. He argues that these two souls are different in kind so that the animal, for Hegel, is not 'ensouled' in the same way as a human. This is principally the case because, as Corti argues, the sensation of the human soul is always already informed by higher faculties.

In 'Truth and Method in Hegel's *Philosophy of Subjective Spirit*,' Joshua Wretzel argues that there is a distinctive kind of transcendental methodology at work in Hegel's philosophy of mind. He shows that Hegel employs a 'circular' or 'organic' transcendental methodology in order to 'deduce' the structure of mind. To Wretzel, this approach has a twofold advantage over those approaches to mind that were favored by Hegel's contemporaries. For one, while other transcendental approaches were either regressive – reasoning from things conditioned to underlying conditions, or progressive – reasoning from basic conditions to things conditioned by them, Hegel's circular approach has it that each moment stands in a reciprocal relation of

both being condition and conditioned with respect to the other moments. And for another, while at least some other forms of transcendental argument seek to reason from conditioning parts to unconditioned whole, Hegel holds that the whole is present in each of the parts. That is, Hegel does not think that the various faculties of mind somehow interact to constitute the whole, but are simply different, variously complex manifestations of the mind's activity itself.

In 'Objective Spirit, Today,' Jean-François Kervégan examines two contemporary appropriations of objective spirit in Hegel. First, he examines Charles Taylor's interpretation and application of objective spirit in his philosophy of the social sciences. He then examines Vincent Descombes's holism in *The Institutions of Meaning*, which makes use of the concept of objective spirit. Kervégan holds that both examples underline the importance for contemporary philosophy to uphold what he calls a 'non-subjectivist view of subjectivity.'

We are happy to include, in our collection, three essays that focus on the difficult sections on absolute spirit in the *Encyclopedia*. The first of these is Tobias Dangel's piece on 'Hegel's Concept of Absolute Spirit as Absolute Truth.' He notes that Hegel operates with an *ontological* conception of truth when he characterizes 'God as the truth and only God.' Dangel compares this kind of ontological truth with what he calls 'formal truth,' or in Hegel's words, 'correctness.' He then develops a threefold thesis defending the ontological understanding of truth in Hegel: (a) that truth, for Hegel, is a property of objects in themselves; (b) that there are different grades of how an object can have true existence; and (c) that the concept of truth has its ultimate satisfaction in absolute spirit, from which it follows that Hegel's doctrine of absolute spirit also explains what God really is.

'The Proximity of Philosophy to Religion: Hegel's Evaluative Reason' is Dean Moyar's contribution, which evaluates the contemporary relevance of Hegel's claims about the role of religion in modern society. For one, Moyar considers Hegel's claim that one must have some sense of religion in order to become interested in philosophy. Moyar argues that, by Hegel's own lights, ethical issues may also play this gateway role, since the problems of morality and ethical life also raise questions of philosophical import. He then argues, somewhat against Hegel, that philosophy can serve in the way that religion has traditionally served, that is as an institution of thought that supports ethical life.

Finally, Sebastian Stein's chapter focuses on Hegel's notion of philosophy as presented in the final subsection of absolute spirit. Stein argues that Hegel's ontological concept most fundamentally defines his notions of idealism and philosophy by grounding (1) the relationship between unconditioned truth and individual thinkers, (2) the philosophical architecture of the encyclopedic system, (3) Hegel's uniquely systematic meta-philosophy, that is his 'philosophy of philosophy' and (4) the relationship between philosophical truth's unconditionality and finite thinkers' conditions. It is

thus Hegel's distinctly 'concept metaphysics'-based notion of philosophy that unifies the kind of universal self-reference often championed by essentialism/naturalism with (post-) Kantian idealism's emphasis on particular otherness.

Thus concludes our volume. The authors hope this collection will continue, for a broader audience, the intense and meaningful conversations that were born during those beautiful spring days in Heidelberg and that blossomed during our conference the following year.

2 Hegel's Science of Reason as a Science of Freedom

From Nuremberg to Heidelberg

Klaus Vieweg

Translated by S. Stein and J. Wretzel

Hegel's guest appearance at the University of Heidelberg in the New Baden region has a place between two particularly honorable assessments of his scholarly importance, in a way between the giants of thinking Spinoza and Fichte: after Spinoza was once called in vain, now – according to the theologian Daub – for the first time, a true philosopher was teaching at Heidelberg University.

Two years later, the Prussian minister Altenstein wants to fill the vacant philosophical chair in Berlin, which was orphaned after Fichte's death, in a dignified way and decides that only Hegel would be suitable for this. At his beginning in Jena, the Stuttgart native was a widely unknown person; now, on his second entry into the academic world, a leading figure of the philosophical parquet is arriving in town.

At Heidelberg University, Hegel feels in his element. In the second home of German Romanticism after Jena, he continues to distinguish himself as a decisive intellectual opponent of Romanticism and a new mythology, and stands in intensive and productive communication with Boisserée and Creuzer. He provides an example of his approach to new trends in art and esthetics by initiating the award of an honorary doctorate to Jean Paul. Hegel also resolutely opposes all calls for the past, for an Old Germany with a nationalist and new-catholic tinge. According to Eichendorff, the castles and woods tell 'a wonderful fairy tale from prehistoric times,' and Görres says that the 'old, former people were bigger, purer and holier.' Hegel is not at all ignorant or contemptuous of the past, but he pleads against merely preserving the traditional and for a free, open view of the spirit of the modern age, for the sublation of the traditional in the double sense of preserving and overcoming.

With this in mind, the philosopher positions himself with regard to political events and trends and intervenes intensively in debates. In this time of the Holy Alliance with its attacks on freedom and secularization, his public impact grows not only through his *Encyclopedia* and the Heidelberg lectures; he also continues to unwaveringly defend the basic ideas of the French Revolution against any attempts at restoration. To him, the dawn of the rejuvenated spirit had come; there had not been such a political upheaval for a thousand years. Hegel thus actively supports the progressive, liberal,

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non-nationalistic efforts for German unity and has immense influence on the 'cosmopolitan' faction of the Heidelberg Fraternity before and after the Wartburg festival. Finally, as a publishing political commentator, he effectively interferes in the Württemberg constitutional dispute.

Regarding the philosophical constellation in Germany as well as the special intellectual debate in Heidelberg, Hegel's engagement rests on four theoretical pillars, and has four weighty thrusts[1]: 1) his *Encyclopedia* offers a systematic foundation and presentation of the monistic idealism of reason in its basic features, including a logic as a new metaphysics; 2) the *Encyclopedia* passages on philosophical psychology and the corresponding lectures provide core building blocks of Hegel's epistemology and sign theory. Derrida was right to speak of Hegel as the founder of modern semiology. The focus here is on the precise formulation of the relationship between representation and the concept. Reflections on representation (imagination, fantasy, imagination) as a formal basis of art have considerable relevance for his communication with Creuzer and Jean Paul and for defining the dividing line between him and Jacobi; 3) the first lecture on the philosophy of law (natural law) presents the outlines of a practical philosophy. It is a philosophy of free will and action; it traces the rational provisions of law and the sphere of law as a sphere of freedom. Here, the basic lines of Hegel's theory of formal law, his moral philosophy and a modern view of society and state are defined, including the epoch-making distinction between bourgeois society and state; 4) his thoughts on a philosophy of art (to be developed further only by means of the first Berlin lecture of 1819) contain a new philosophical understanding of art history and of modern art as free art. This art form is consciously conceived as the Romantic one, thus overcoming the gap between the one-sided classicist and romantic theories of art (Voß versus Görres and Creuzer).

The foundations of this systematic cathedral of thought were laid in Nuremberg, and the latter two of its cornerstones will be dealt with in more detail here, where Hegel's life and thought intersect. In this way, the *Encyclopedia* topos of a science of reason could be supported by a science of freedom, and previous evaluations of the Nuremberg phase, which often and quite wrongly lead to becoming a wallflower in scholarship, could be put into a new light. After all, Hegel was not only headmaster in Franconia, but also conceived modern logic as a new metaphysics and brought it onto the academic stage in Heidelberg. What follows are some remarks on the subject of natural law and esthetics.

2.1 In the Run-Up to the Heidelberg Esthetics – Hegel and the Fascinating Art Treasures of Nuremberg

In 1826, the Hegel pupils Eduard Gans and Heinrich Gustav Hotho reported on a visit to Nuremberg. Hotho had been commissioned to give a

1 These accounts are essentially based on the Nürnberg and Heidelberg chapter of the Hegel biography: Klaus Vieweg: *Hegel – der Philosoph der Freiheit*, München 2019.

commemorative speech in Berlin to mark the 300th anniversary of Albrecht Dürer's death. Hegel had certainly recommended this trip and assured the help of the von Tucher family. In the report to Hegel we read: 'Among the pictures, one Dürer is probably the most excellent, whom we saw at Mr. v. Holzschuher's house through the kind mediation of Mr. v. Tucher.'[2] The Nuremberg period offers a significant, hitherto unnoticed prime example of the intertwining of life and thought and the relevance of fortunate circumstances for philosophical work: Nuremberg was a huge treasure trove of art, the reception of which left striking traces in Hegel's later lectures on art. Here, four components interlock: firstly, the wide-ranging interest in the various art genres and collections, stretching from the Gothic churches of the old imperial city, the art fountains, painting, copperplate engravings and lithographs to literature, the latter with a clear presence in headmaster Hegel's lessons. With regard to Nuremberg, the Gothic churches with their paintings, sculptures and stained glass, as well as the representative houses, left a deep impression on him, among the churches especially Sebalder and Lorenzer Kirche, as well as the Frauenkirche on the market (with an altar by Veit Stoß). In the Sebaldus Church, one could find reliefs by Adam Kraft, painted windows by Hirschvogl, crucifixes by Veit Stoß and Peter Vischer's monumental work of Sebald's grave. The Lorenz Church contained the English greeting of Veit Stoß and the sacrament house of Adam Kraft, both explicitly mentioned by Hegel. [3]

Hegel also knew a large part of the masterpieces of secular architecture very well; most of the owners belonged to his family, friends and acquaintances. The beautiful fountain and the bronze figure of the goose-man also remained clear in his memory: at the Schönbrunnen, one could see the world view of the Roman Empire, philosophy, the seven arts, the evangelists and the church fathers. The goose-man at the Nuremberg marketplace, much admired by Goethe and Meyer, 'is a peasant boy of highly vivid depiction in ore, carrying a goose to the marketplace on each arm.'[4] Hotho also considered this depiction of everyday life as a prime example of modern sculpture.

The second treasure trove included the extremely rich art collections in Nuremberg, Pommersfelden and Munich, where Hegel could see a large number of masterpieces of painting. In the 18th century, Lothar Franz von Schönborn founded one of the largest private collections of paintings in Germany at his Schloss Weißenstein. Hegel's assessments of the paintings also show the contrast to the visits of Wackenroder and Tieck to the Nuremberg and Pommersfelden collections,[5] and a difference to the

2 See Helmut Schneider: 'Hegel und Hotho bei den Dürer-Feiern 1828 in Berlin,' in *Hegelforschung* Band 4/5, 1998/1999.

3 Hegel: *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*. TWA 14, 459.

4 Ibid. Goethe had a smaller copy set up in Weimar (the present-day Schillerstraße).

5 See Heinz Lippuner: *Wackenroder/Tieck und die bildenden Künste*, Zürich 1965.

art collector Sulpiz Boisserée, with whom Hegel visits the art treasures of Nuremberg. It reveals the thinkers' different conceptions of art theory, especially Hegel's rejection of Romantic sentimentalism, which was closer to the spirit of Goethe. The Romantic Wackenroder saw himself transported to the Middle Ages by the splendor of Nuremberg's churches and the works of art and would have liked to meet a knight or monk. Later Hegel ironized the 'Altdeutschthümler,' who praised a painting the older it was and the worse it was painted.[6] Meanwhile, Hegel appreciates the great Italian painters, Michelangelo, Leonardo and Raphael. These weighty differences become apparent especially in the works of Dürer as well as in Italian and Dutch painting. Hegel lived for a decade in Dürer's city, and was later able to see his masterpieces in Heidelberg, Berlin, Aachen and Berlin. He emphasizes the freedom and spirituality of the Nuremberg genius, the early depiction of a self-confident bourgeoisie – 'the spiritual seems to emerge into the world with its will.' Hegel would probably have seen the portrait of Hieronymus Holzschuher at his friend Holzschuher's home. As a former listener to Fichte in Jena and legal expert, Holzschuher was certainly an interesting discussion partner for the philosopher. The castle gallery – for which Hegel's relative, the painter Haller von Hallerstein, was responsible – possessed works by Lukas Cranach (portraits of Luther and Melanchthon), Hans Holbein and the Dutch school, as well as several paintings by Dürer (Four Apostles, Charlemagne). In the Merkel house, Hegel and the art expert Sulpiz Boisserée, who was staying in Nuremberg, looked at 'Dürer things.'[7] Other collections also held top-class treasures, and the first art association in Germany, the *Kunst-Societät*, was founded in Nuremberg.[8] But not only the Dürer works could adorn large galleries, the works of other German, Italian and Dutch masters slumbering in the Nuremberg villas at the time would today render a world exhibition of painting possible. Among them are the Dutch geniuses, who were especially valued by Hegel: P. Breughel, Rembrandt and Schule, the horse painter Wouwermann (several paintings in Pommersfelden), Rubens, Ruysdael, Hals, Teniers and Ostade.

The royal residence city of Munich is considered by Hegel to be one of the most excellent locations in Germany, because of its art treasures! Among these were the famous beggar children of the Spaniard Murillo, Hegel's particular favorites. He finds an expression of the ideal of modern art[9] in their depictions – a higher soul, a 'spiritual serenity' and fresh, bright spiritual freedom and vitality. His clear preference for paintings expressing bourgeois

6 See G. W. F. Hegel: *Vorlesung über Ästhetik. Berlin 1820/21. Eine Nachschrift*. Ed. Helmut Schneider. Frankfurt a. M. 1995, 265.

7 See Merkel: *Briefe/Tagebuch* 18, Nr. 129. Bl. 148–150. Tagebuch 2. 5. 1816.

8 Edith Luther: J. F. Frauenholz Nürnberg 1988. Frauenholz exchanged letters with Schiller and was in contact with Goethe.

9 Vgl. TWA 8, 223f.

self-confidence, becomes obvious. Many of the painters mentioned and their works are the subject of his later lectures on esthetics; according to Hegel, an esthetic must rest on extensive knowledge of art history. On this basis, Hegel's departs from the Romantics' fixation on pre-modern painting and develops a preference for the Dutch as the exemplary performers of a modern, self-confident, free bourgeoisie.

A third facet is provided by the contact with Sulpiz Boisserée, the art collector and historian, which was already established in Bamberg and continued in Nuremberg. From May to June 1816, Boisserée visited Nuremberg and developed an intensive contact with the philosopher. Sometimes together with Hegel, the guest from Heidelberg roamed the Nuremberg art scene, from churches to private collections. As early as the beginning of May 1816, a meeting between Boisserée, Hegel, Seebeck, Holzschuher and the painter and art collector Christoph Haller von Hallerstein takes place at Merkel's home – they look at Dürer works. Haller von Hallerstein had studied with Dannecker in Stuttgart and with Graff in Dresden, then worked as a drawing teacher for Prince von Metternich and the later King Friedrich Wilhelm IV, and from 1809 at the Nuremberg School of Arts and Crafts and in the picture gallery. Hegel was related to him and knew him and certainly his collection.

The fourth point concerns the hitherto unexplained origin of some of the important pieces in the famous collection of the English collector Edward Solly.[10] A letter from Hegel's friend Merkel (April 23, 1817) may shed light on the provenance of a considerable part of Solly's collection and the Berlin Academy, namely from the Nuremberg holdings of Hans Albrecht von Derschau (including an extensive series of works by Dutch masters): 'all of the paintings of the head [man] Derschau bought for 4/c Carolin and the Academy of Arts there [his] copper engraving collection 18/M sheets for 8/M Rf. and Göthe s[a] Majolica collection for 20 Carolins.'[11] Since Solly sold his collection to the Prussian state in 1821 and the academy later received the engravings of Derschau as a gift from the king,[12] the art city Nuremberg supplies the foundation of the Berlin picture gallery in whose construction Hegel then participates directly and indirectly via his listeners and pupils.

Already in his *Encyclopedia* course in 1816, Hegel paid particular attention to esthetics. His first lectures on the philosophy of art in Berlin in 1818 were based on the Nuremberg art experience. His astonishingly sharp view of painting is confirmed by two later assessments: on the one hand, he sees clear similarities between two pictures from the Boisserée and Solly

10 See Robert Skwirblies: 'A National Property that every resident should be proud of: the Solly Collection as the basis of the Berlin Picture Gallery,' in *Berliner Museen* 51 (2009).

11 Merkel *Briefe/Tagebuch* E 18, Nr. 411.

12 See Skwirblies: The Solly Collection, 86.

collections – between a van Eyckian Christ's head and a Hans Memling attributed to him, which are in fact copies after van Eyck. On the other hand, he recognizes the isolated parts of the Löwener Abendmahl altar by Dirk Bouts as images that belong together; he had seen one at Boisserée in Heidelberg, the other in the Bettendorf Collection in Aachen.[13]

2.2 Esthetics in Grammar School

The 'heaviest' of philosophical problems can only be treated in small doses in grammar school. Hegel provides an enlightening self-assessment of this, which illustrates his dilemma as a high school teacher: 'I always work against myself, for I know neither how to get along with [the speculative] – because of the listeners – nor without it – because of myself.' His appropriate activity would be teaching at the university rather than teaching philosophy at the grammar school. He sees a small way out in the double form of speculation, which consists in the distinction between the form of expression or representation of the idea and the form of the concept. On the one hand, thoughts are formed by the power of imagination, as images and more as a 'narrative.' Thoughts are 'placed in front of the imagination' and do not emerge as distinct concepts; they are not painted 'grey in grey,' but in the variety and colorfulness of the imagining. For example, contents like 'creation' conflicts in law (Antigone) and the Good Friday can be quite easily depicted, infinitely more difficult is communicating the speculative Good Friday. The contents of art and religion can thus help with the acquisition of ideas of speculative content. The form of expression of the concept should be used only sparingly and the highest forms of speculative content should be mostly avoided. Niethammer's demand at the learning of speculative thought remains a necessary goal, but only in the form of a slow working towards it, as a philosophical preparatory science.

As prizes for excellent student performance, Hegel awards Homer and Horace, Racine, Marmontel, Rochefoucauld, Corneille, Schiller's poems and Goethe's Hermann and Dorothea. In selecting these awards, which have expanded over the years, Hegel's handwriting clearly stands out: the spectrum ranges from Homer's Iliad, Sophocles' tragedies, Terenz' comedies to Montesquieu's Esprit de Lois and Lessing's Nathan and Schiller's Wallenstein. On festive occasions, the students recite Schiller's ballad *Der Taucher*, recite from Schiller's *Jungfrau von Orleans* and from Goethe's *Werther*, and one reads monologues from Goethe's *Egmont* and *Faust* as well as from Schiller's *Bürgschaft*.

13 Today the parts are united again in the Leuvener Peterskriche. See Otto Pöggeler: 'Hegel und die Geburt des Museums' in *Kunst als Kulturgut. Die Bildersammlung der Brüder – ein Schritt in der Begründung des Museums*. Hrsg. v. Annemarie Gethmann-Siefert u. Otto Pöggeler. Bonn 1995, 201.

2.3 Hegel's First Esthetics Lecture

An interesting group of listeners of the Heidelberg esthetics course consisting of Waagen, Kugler and the Solger student Schnaase will become important art experts and art historians in Berlin and co-found the Berlin School of Art History. Schnaase sees Hegel's influence clairvoyantly in his ideas of linking history with the categories of the logical. Schnaase records that he went to Berlin with the famous teacher, whose *Encyclopedia* and *Phenomenology* he studied intensively in order to be able to grasp the 'wide circle of vision' and the totality of the system (including the philosophy of art). Special attention was paid to a fundamental idea: the connection of history with the 'categories of logical thought.'[14] In the context of a systematic project, the universal historical dimension is to be amalgamated with the empirical, source-critical dimension. The rise of the Berlin art scene in the 1920s, like the emergence of scholarly art history as an independent discipline, thus also has a significant source in Hegel's philosophy and his lectures on esthetics in Heidelberg and Berlin. Eugen Gombrich has, as is well known, described Hegel as the father of art history. This much is certain: Hegel had a decisive influence on the philosophical foundation of art studies and the discipline of art history.

2.4 The Boisserée Collection, Creuzer and Jean Paul

Hegel also owes his acquaintance with Boisserée to the painters Koester, Schlesinger and Xeller, who worked as restorers for the art collector and later also went to Berlin. Hegel received a Heidelberg painting by the former as a farewell gift when he left Heidelberg, and well-known portraits of Hegel were painted by the latter two and by the Heidelberg student of Hegel's, Franz Kugler. The controversy over the 'old' and the 'new' remains: Hegel is against the mere conservation of an 'authentic' old, for example with regard to painting or in the case of the Cologne Cathedral. As a criterion and in contrast to Boisserée, Hegel considers the positioning of Dutch painting of the Golden Century as a paradigm for the artistic expression of modern bourgeois self-understanding. This is expressed in the highly divergent assessment of the Solly collection, which discredits Sulpiz as an accumulation of fake art. Hegel has not succeeded here in getting the art connoisseur on his side. The tirades of a Friedrich Schlegel against the Solly collection, especially because of the works of the later Dutch painters, culminate in Schlegel's accusations of degeneration and platitude. The true Christian art

14 Lionel von Donop, Art. 'Schnaase, Karl.' In: *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* 32 (1891), 67. Vgl. also Henrik Karge: Franz Kugler und Karl Schnaase – two projects to establish the 'Allgemeinen Kunstgeschichte.' In: *Franz Theodor Kugler. Deutscher Kunsthistoriker und Berliner Dichter*. Hrsg. v. Michel Espagne, Bénédicte Savoy u. Celine Trautmann-Waller. Berlin 2010, 83ff.

– according to the new Catholic – represents Christ's death on the cross and Mary. Goethe and Hegel, on the other hand, concentrated on the esthetic value of the masterpieces[15] which now move from the devotional room to the museum, and the Boisserées also played a significant role in this, which manifests their equivocal work: a collection of early Christian paintings and museum presentation, whereby the paintings become primarily objects of art history and esthetics. The Dutch depictions of proud citizens, working farmers, a basket of fruit or a drunkard in an inn, on the other hand, manifest in Hegel's eyes – similar to Cervantes' *Don Quixote* and Shakespeare's genius and the novels of a Laurence Sterne, and the music of a Mozart – the emancipation of modern romantic art.

The discussions with the 'symbolist' Creuzer also had a correspondingly important potential for intellectual stimulation. One of the concerns here were questions of the past, about the old mythologies, about the old oriental world of thought, about the relationship of the pictorial to the conceptual. Although Hegel rejects the possibility of a new mythology, he is undertaking the best of collegial exchanges with Creuzer, even if Hegel considers the symbolic-pictorial as incommensurable with the language of the concept.[16] Hegel thus received decisive impulses from his colleague in Heidelberg both for the sharpening of Hegel's concept of the 'translation' of the languages of representation and of the concept and for his understanding of mythologies, of Asian cultures and of oriental art as a symbolic art form. In a lecture, Hegel probably spoke of the 'dear friend Creuzer,' whose writing pays tribute to the symbolism and mythology of the ancient peoples, especially the Greeks, but at the same time makes it clear that the ancients implicitly exposed rational things with their myths. However, they did not express philosophical content in its proper form, that is in the language of the concept, as thinking reason. Their mythologies are regarded as creations of imagination, of fantasy, in which the content, the idea cannot be adequately represented.

2.5 Why Does Hegel Vehemently Advocate an Honorary Doctorate for Jean Paul?

On June 18, 1817, the official presentation of the certificate to the new Doctor of Philosophy and Liberal Arts took place, accompanied by a torchlight procession by students, an important impetus for the foundation of the

15 The disparagement of the Nazarene school on the part of Goethe and Hegel, however, overshoots the target somewhat; it is cultural-political in context, but takes too little account of the esthetic quality of the works.

16 Lothar Pikulik: 'Die sogenannte Heidelberg Romantik. Tendenzen, Grenzen, Widersprüche. Mit einem Epilog über das Nachleben der Romantik heute,' in *Heidelberg im säkularen Umbruch. Traditionsbewußtsein und Kulturpolitik um 1800*. Hrsg. v. Friedrich Strack. Stuttgart 1987, 204.

fraternity. The reasons lie in the historical as well as in the local context, a signal is given for modern poetry and a modern philosophy of art beyond romanticism and classicism. From Hegel's point of view, the Siebenkäs poet and author of the Preschool of Aesthetics represents this in an outstanding way. Together with Theodor Gottlieb von Hippel, he is considered a) the most important representative of the new type of novel founded by Laurence Sterne, the most important German Sternian; b) an outstanding representative of the comic, of modern humor, the highest form of expression of free art for Hegel; c) with his biting satire of censorship, the poet had impaled a basic evil of surviving structures and left a good impression on the reform-oriented forces; d) his criticism of Kantians as 'categorical emperors' and his criticism of Fichteana in the Clavis Fichteana certainly amused Hegel and last but not least e) Jean Paul's Preschool of Aesthetics was formative for Hegel's philosophy of art, and the philosopher regarded the poet as a representative of modern, romantic art, which stands out in a context defined by late romantic medieval longing and monastic brotherhood. [17]

And yet, not surprisingly, there was not a complete harmony between philosopher and poet; after all, it was all about the difficult relationship between the phalanx of the concept and the army of metaphors: The poet, 'always overcome by the commander that is thought, is said to have very skillfully fled into the caves of imagination to the delight of the philosopher' – precisely onto the poet's very own terrain. After the ceremony, wine from Baden was thoroughly appreciated.

2.6 Service to the Common Good – Towards an Industrial Society

The structure and work of the Nuremberg Society for the Promotion of Patriotic Industry gave the thinker deep insights into the historical upheavals leading to a modern society and proved to be a treasure trove for the further development of his practical philosophy, especially regarding the revolutionary distinction between the sphere of bourgeois society and the political sphere of the state, which is one of the most momentous innovations of Hegel's modern thinking on freedom. The spiritus rector of this association was the 'first citizen' of Nuremberg, the businessman P. W. Merkel, who again shows himself to be a leading bourgeois reformer influenced by the ideas of the Enlightenment. For his merits he was sent to the Bavarian parliament in 1818 as the first bourgeois deputy of Nuremberg. Just as his friend Niethammer was the decisive contact person for Hegel in matters of education, so Merkel had been living for more than eight years

17 See Klaus Vieweg: 'Humor als ver-sinnlichte Skepsis – Hegel und Jean Paul,' in Wandschneider, Dieter (Hg.): *Das Geistige und das Sinnliche in der Kunst. Ästhetische Refl exion in der Perspektive des Deutschen Idealismus*. Würzburg 2005.

of his political and social life in the former imperial city. The highest principle of the association was the 'common good,' the public welfare of the city. Hegel's later replacement of the category of bliss by that of well-being finds one of its sources here. According to Merkel, everyone should enjoy 'equal rights, who, through their talents, through their knowledge, through their diligence, through their virtues, rise as high as they are able to.'[18] In addition to support for trade and crafts, it was a question of wide-ranging socio-political commitment, of sensible social regulation of economic structures and, decisively, of educating citizens in accordance with the motto: 'Reducing human suffering and promoting human welfare.'[19] With regard to the institutional formation of the urban community, the views of Merkel and Hegel were largely in agreement – the establishment of a fair tax system, an aid fund for needy tradespeople, the founding of a girls' school and a school for doctors and midwives. Since a considerable part, probably a quarter, of the city population lived in great poverty, a plan for the reorganization of the poor was already conceived in 1793, and a school for the poor and soup kitchens were also established. Not only through reports from England, but also from his own experience, Hegel was able to see the gap between rich and poor as a serious problem in the construction of modern societies on a daily basis.

His commitment as school councilor responsible for the entire school system in Nuremberg for the School for the Poor, which required urgent reorganization but proved to be very complicated, should be considered in this context. It illustrates his principle of education as a public task for all citizens.[20] While Merkel is still strongly oriented towards trade and crafts and articulates aversion to the new factories and the English manufacturing system, Hegel agrees with Merkel's critical findings or has even influenced them, that 'the owners enrich themselves there alone and the producing class remains in need and vegetates like "rational beasts of burden."'[21] But the philosopher, in contrast to his friend, sees in the industrial structure the basis of the new, modern forms of society, which, however, due to the enormous disruption and alienation that arises within it, requires regulation and social organization even more strongly as a condition for its functioning.

The urban structure of Nuremberg in transition to the slowly developing industry can thus be regarded as a space of experience for the thinker, a space that has a significant weight in the conception of Hegel's theory of a modern society and a social state, which then comes to the public fore in the

18 See Rebecca Habermas: *Frauen und Männer des Bürgertums. Eine Familiengeschichte (1750–1850)*. Göttingen 2000, 176.

19 Georg Seiderer: *Formen der Aufklärung in fränkischen Städten*. München 1997, 351.

20 See Michael Winkler: 'Hegel und die Nürnberger Armenschulen. In: Die Logik des Wissens und das Problem der Erziehung.' Nürnberger Hegel-Tage, Hamburg 1982. Montgelas, Bavaria's minister of the interior expressly praised Hegel's efforts.

21 Vgl. Seiderer: *Formen der Aufklärung in fränkischen Städten*, 352.

shape of the Berlin version of the philosophy of right. This often completely underexposed facet of the Nuremberg years was by no means marginal. On the contrary: it revealed a central, universal concern of the 'old politicus,' namely the construction of a philosophy of freedom. Substantial themes – freedom of will and action, deed and action, morality, welfare, separation of powers and the tripartite structure of law, morality and state – occupy an important space, although not yet in a mature form. For example, it still assigns the family to the sphere of morality and does not yet define the clear separation of civil society and state. It becomes obvious, however, that the idea of reason or thinking is inseparably connected with that of freedom when one considers Hegel's treatment of these themes: from the fundamental treatment of practical philosophy as a theory of free will to the emphasis on political freedom, freedom of the press and religious freedom. Discussing these in Hegel's manner was in no way common practice at the time, but rather part of a revolution in the teaching of philosophy. A particularly striking point is made by Hegel's classically inspired study of the state forms of democracy, monarchy and aristocracy as well as their forms of decay: ochlocracy, oligarchy and despotism (tyranny), amongst which despotism (sole rule) is explicitly regarded as the most dangerous, which entails that the monarchy must be regarded as the most risky and threatening political constitution.

Certainly, Hegel's Nuremberg pupil Wirth hit the nail on the head: in his philosophy lessons in Nuremberg, Hegel tried to 'ignite the immortal spark of freedom' in his pupils, to introduce them to the comprehension of freedom, completely in the sense of the core message of the main work from the Franconian period. The concept is what is free.

2.7 Hegel and the Wartburg Festival

Significantly, in Heidelberg two main factions of the fraternity face off against each other – the so-called 'Germans' or 'Blacks' and the so-called 'Cosmopolitans' – while the latter were also called Hegelians! The intellectual influence of the new professor was immediately visible in public-political terms. The Teutonic, xenophobic and anti-Semitic faction, on the other hand, had its masterminds in Fries, the Friesian Johann Leberecht de Wette, Ernst Moritz Arndt and Friedrich Ludwig Jahn. Carové worked as the main founder of the democratic cosmopolitan movement, with Hegel in the background. He advocated a universalist viewpoint instead of Christian-Germanic, nationalist ideas – every enrolled student at the university was granted academic citizenship and the right to be a member of the fraternity. However, after Carové's opponents gained the upper hand, foreigners and Jews were excluded. Fries had prepared the ground for this with his unspeakable essay, published in the Heidelberg Yearbooks in 1816, 'Ueber die Gefährdung des Wohlstandes und Charakters der Deutschen durch die Juden,' in which he even advocates the identification of Jews by their

clothing! The dividing line in Heidelberg was well defined: 'The strict blacks did not want to know anything about Hegel.'[22] This honors the philosopher in an almost extraordinary way. 'All the cosmopolitans, be it Mr. Hegel or Carové, are fools, who, above their ideas and abstractions, either overlook reality altogether, or don't know it at all, or are crazy.'[23] Julius Niethammer, who was, like Asverus and Gottlieb von Tucher, initially a firebrand, and had been infected by Deutschtümelei, suggests to take Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* as the theoretical basis for the fraternity but this resulted in an unsurprising shipwreck.

Anton Good, whose transcript of Hegel's Heidelberg *Encyclopedia* lecture has survived, met with Sand several times and sympathized with this fanatical fraternity member, who himself was a follower of Friesianism, especially of the Friesian de Wette. Good and de Wette both justify the political murder of Kotzebue by Sand; de Wette even calls the assassination 'a beautiful sign of our time' and declares that Sand 'sacrificed himself as an instrument of God, as a martyr for a good cause'! He uses the language of fanaticism, of fundamentalism, and terror is justified – 'everyone acts only according to his conviction' (de Wette), or out of conviction and intuition (Fries) instead of being motivated by thought-informed recognition. Hegel, on the other hand, describes Sand as a miserable guy. Hegel's anger towards the Fries clique that is already evident in Heidelberg and explodes and sometimes is exaggerated in Berlin, along with Hegel's allegations of shallowness, superficiality and political dangerousness against them, must also be seen against this background.[24] The reform efforts were brought into great difficulties by terror and fanaticism. The enemies of reform took advantage of this and gained the upper hand. The Carlsbad resolutions and the so-called demagogue persecutions were the fatal result, the Restoration era would take its course and Hegel positions himself in a decisive manner both against the major ideologist of the Restoration, Karl Ludwig von Haller, and against the masterminds of the nationalist-fanatic wing of the advocates of reform and German unity, that is against Fries, de Wette, the French-hater Arndt and Turnvater Jahn. Carové was a disciple of Hegel and

22 Vgl. *Als Student und Burschenschaftler in Heidelberg von 1816 bis 1819. Aus den Lebenserinnerungen von C. H. Alexander Pagenstecher.* Hrsg. v. Alexander Pagenstecher. Leipzig 1913, 56. See also: Friedrich Strack: Hegels Persönlichkeit im Spiegel der Tagebücher Sulpiz Boisserées und der Lebenserinnerungen C. H. A. Pagenstechers. In: *Hegel-Studien* 17 (1982).

23 Paul Wentzcke: Ein Schüler Hegels aus der Frühzeit der Burschenschaft. Gustav Asverus in Heidelberg, Berlin und Jena. In: *Quellen und Darstellungen zur Geschichte der Burschenschaft und der deutschen Einheitsbewegung*. Ed. Herman Haupt. Vol. V. Heidelberg 1920, 93ff.; 102f.

24 The Fries people had colluded massively against Hegel, deliberately distorting Hegel's philosophy and contending that Hegel was a Schellingian and a follower of natural philosophy (Hegel Br II, 397ff.). De Wette submitted a nasty separate attack against Hegel (Hegel Br II, 402).

a weighty opponent of the black Teutons. He was insulted by Loholm, the radical follower of Fries, and was called a 'stupid rascal'[25] who wants to accustom the lads 'to the universal and reasonable' (thus to Hegel instead of to Fries and Arndt). Carové later becomes one of the most prominent victims of the Restoration and the Carlsbad resolutions.

In any case, Hegel had eminent intellectual influence on some representatives of the student movement. Theodor von Kobbe speaks of the 'great merits' which Hegel 'acquired for the young minds; his philosophical jurisprudence, his teaching of the state as the truly ethical idea, came only before the consciousness of a few, but nevertheless largely of the best minds.' Richard Rothe impressively draws the counterposition against Hegel: 'The "Germans" are confronted in the fraternity e diametro by the so-called philosophers or Hegelians [...] They are the most hated by the Germans and above all among them Carové.' [26]

From Hegel's point of view, political commitment and a theoretical foundation must harmonize; this requires, as in the Württemberg constitutional dispute, a precisely differentiated position, articulated in a double front against the anti-reform, restorative forces and their ideologist von Haller on the one hand, and against the radical fanatical, German-nationalist reformists with their background in Friesianism and the nationalism of an Arndt on the other. These strongly opposed directions overlap, however, in two substantial points that are clearly stated in Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, already in its Heidelberg version: for one, they both reject the rational, thinking justification of practical philosophy. Instead of trusting the concept, one relies on mere subjective conviction, especially enthusiasm and feeling, as well as on the naturally particular, in both cases combined with the hypocrisy of good intention. By contrast, Hegel refers back to Rousseau and the French Revolution, which start at the very beginning with the concept and want to overcome everything that seems sacrosanct. However, during the period of terror, the revolutionary project plunged into the radical elimination of the particular and thus into fanaticism.

Restoration and its radicalized opposition are marked by this assertion of one-sided principles; Fries as well as von Haller simply 'thoughtlessly' push aside legislation and constitutions without theoretically engaging with them (Bill of Rights, French constitutions from 1789 up to the Napoleonic Code, or the Prussian Constitution), Instead, one is boiling a mash of 'natural inequality' (von Haller) or feeling, presentiment and conviction (Friesians) – views that do not present any serious philosophical legitimization and can be unmasked in their hatred of all objectification as an apologetic ideology. The particular (nature, conviction) is elevated in its isolation to the sole principle of determination.

25 'dummer Hundsfott'.

26 Richard Rothe quoted from: Ilting: Homeyer-Nachschrift Rechtsphilosophie, 44f.

For another, a pseudo-legitimation is still significant in religion, in Christianity, in an 'empty piety' – de Wette sees the assassin Sand as an instrument of God and as a martyr, von Haller even thinks of himself that he is the one who pronounces the word of God. Hegel, on the other hand, sees in this piety a perversion of religion per se and an open abuse of the Christian religion. Written directly against Fries and his hostility towards foreigners and Jews is the important §209 of the Berlin *Philosophy of Right*, in which the militant, German, dumb nationalism is countered by a universalistic, cosmopolitan understanding, which nevertheless does not lapse into empty cosmopolitanism: it belongs to comprehending thought and cannot be constituted by feeling or conviction alone, that an ego 'is understood as a general person, in which all are identical. Man is considered so because he is man, not because he is Jewish, Catholic, Protestant, German, Italian, etc.' (GW 14/1, 175).

Hegel's summary characterizing both parties could read: Christian fanaticism is the fury of mere destruction. The incredibly harsh and polemical and sometimes overtly aggressive attacks on both political camps have their background here. Hegel's intellectual and political work is aimed at sensible reforms in a Germany that will be united in the future, against the reactionary policies of the *Holy Alliance*, for the constitution of a modern community, for the fact that the rights of the citizens and the duties of the state can be combined, just like the law of the state and the duties of the citizens. Only what can justify itself before our reason can claim validity. Hegel continued to determine thought and freedom as his permanent and fundamental concerns when he was walking along the Neckar and strolling along on the Philosophenweg. In the Nuremberg-Heidelberg facets that were treated in this chapter, we see Hegel's basic concerns shimmer through: a science of reason as the science of freedom.

3 Hegel's Heidelberg *Encyclopedia* as the Principal Work of a Metaphysics of *Geist*[1]

Jens Halfwassen

Translated by S. Stein and J. Wretzel

Introduction

There is a painting hanging on a wall in the senate chambers (Senatssaal) of the old university Heidelberg that is probably familiar to most of you. It is a work that seems larger than life and shows the Ruperto Carola – the female impersonation of our university. As a woman clothed in antique attire, she stands in front of a gothic chair that reminds the observer of a throne – could it be a professor's chair? With her right hand, she points at a collection of books lying next to her and her digit points at an opened volume on top of the pile. Taking a closer look, we discover two stone tables at the bottom of the pile, one is covered in hieroglyphs, the other shows cuneiform writing. Both tablets thus represent the ancient oriental and Egyptian foundations of our culture – the 19th century painter seems to have foreseen that Jan Assmann and Stefan Maul would one day teach here in Heidelberg. On top of these tablets, the bible rests majestically like a folio. And resting above it, we can find three further substantial volumes. On their backs we can read 'Aristotle,' 'Corpus Juris Justiani' and 'Kant.' And at the pinnacle, there lies a final, opened book. As a whole, this pile represents the spiritual-historical development of our culture from its foundations in ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia onto Jewish monotheism, Roman law and ancient and modern philosophy.

But what exactly is the open book that lies on top of the pile and to which the Ruperto Carola points? Because it is opened, the spine of the book, on which the name of the author should be found, remains invisible. Given the carefully composed logic of the picture, we can nevertheless deduce which work it is. It must sum up the entire intellectual development that the pile underneath illustrates. The sequence of the books suggests that

1 This talk was delivered by Prof. Dr. Jens Halfwassen in the context of a conference in Heidelberg dedicated to the 200th anniversary of Hegel's Heidelberg *Encyclopedia* entitled 'The Enduring Relevance of Hegel's System: The *Encyclopedia* at 200.' Sadly, Prof. Halfwassen (†2020) has passed away since then, and we would like to express our deeply felt gratitude to this man, who dedicated much of his intellectual life to Hegel and all of it to the search, communication and defense of truth.

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it is a philosophical work. And so there is only one work that comes to mind: *Hegel's Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences in Outline*, published in 1817 in Heidelberg, where Hegel was appointed full professor of philosophy in 1816.

3.1 The *Encyclopedia* in Context

Before his appointment to Heidelberg, which he received in July 1816 and accepted in August, Hegel had been director of an elite Bavarian grammar school in Nuremberg starting in 1808. Before that, he had been a newspaper editor in Bamberg from 1807 onwards and before then he was a private lecturer in Jena starting in 1801. In the Jena years, he developed his philosophical system and in Bamberg and in Nuremberg he wrote his two main works, the *Phenomenology of Spirit* of 1807 and the *Science of Logic* of 1812. Hegel was thus already in possession of his philosophical system at the time of his appointment. And what a system that was! It does not simply appear as another, new and supposedly better one alongside the many older philosophical systems. Rather, Hegel claims to suspend and preserve within itself all the relevant insights of fundamental rank that philosophical thought has gained throughout its history since its pre-Socratic beginnings. And not only that: he also claims to reveal the inner logic of development, according to which the insights of all the philosophers of rank build upon each other and according to which they do not contradict or refute each other, but are compatible, forming a comprehensive synthesis. Hegel's philosophy is thus not just another theory alongside earlier ones but on a higher level, it is also a theory of theories: a theory of the true content of philosophical theories and of the logic of philosophical development, according to which all truths are interrelated and form a single unified whole. Never in the entire history of philosophy has a more ambitious claim been made – and never has there been a philosophy which, like Hegel's, sums up the entire history of philosophy in itself from within a profound understanding of its great classics. If today we interpret Plato or the Pre-Socratics, Aristotle and Plotinus, Proklos and Descartes, Spinoza or Leibniz, and treat their thinking not as a gone and obsolete history, but as expressions of a living and present truth, then we stand with this truth on the shoulders of Hegel and learn from his insights, even if this means that sometimes we must contradict his interpretation of these great classics in detail. Hegel teaches us the history of philosophy as an event of truth – not as a banal sequence of coincidences nor as a chain of errors and their refutation, in the manner a naive positivist belief in progress interprets the development of human knowledge. Instead, Hegel shows us how the historicity of thought does not contradict the supra-historical eternity of truth but rather how its self-representation takes place in time.

Hegel developed the basic features of his system in Jena and refined them in Nuremberg. But he never presented his revolutionary philosophical system in a coherent way before his appointment to Heidelberg. His two main

works that were already mentioned, the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the *Science of Logic*, are not representations of his system, but function only as its foundations. The *Phenomenology of Spirit* gradually liberates consciousness from its bias in favor of the finite forms of consciousness and leads it out of its self-forgetfulness up to the point where self-consciousness grasps itself and its unity with truth by manner of thinking. Hegel calls this point 'absolute knowledge' and means by it the identity of thinking and being, of which the pre-Socratic philosopher Parmenides had already spoken. *The Science of Logic* then unfolds the content of this absolute knowledge – not 'logic' in the usual sense as a set of rules of correct rational thinking and reasoning, but a metaphysics of absolute thinking and its basic determinations, in the sequence and systematic unity in which absolute thinking comprehends and knows itself as the fullness of being – Hegel refers to this thinking self-knowing as totality of all pure determinations with the expression of Plato's 'idea,' or as Hegel calls it, the 'absolute idea'; and Hegel interprets this absolute idea with Plotinus as the spirit divine, which knows itself as the triune unity of thinking, living and being. Hegel's logic is thus a metaphysics, a theory of principles, in which absolute thinking recognizes itself as the principle of all principles – and because this is God as spirit, it is at the same time a theology. This kind of theological metaphysics functions as a first philosophy but it does not constitute the whole of Hegelian philosophy. In addition, there is what Hegel calls *Realphilosophie* or 'real philosophy': the philosophical comprehension of the entire worldly reality in all its richness. It is the worldliness and historical saturation of his 'real philosophy' that makes Hegel's philosophy so unique – from nature to soul and spirit, from law to morals to state and world history, from art to religion to the history of philosophy, it contains in incomparable abundance and unique concreteness everything that philosophical theory formation can be directed towards at all. From 1818 onwards, Hegel worked out this real philosophy more and more in his great Berlin lectures on the philosophy of law, the philosophy of world history, esthetics, the philosophy of religion, the proof of the existence of God and the history of philosophy – and it was these great Berlin lectures that established Hegel's world fame.

However, Hegel has only once coherently presented the whole of his philosophical system, that is the whole of real philosophy in its connection with its metaphysical basis in logic: in his *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*. This third major work of Hegel's bears the subtitle 'to be used with his lectures.' In the foreword, Hegel writes: 'The need to provide my listeners with a guide to my philosophical lectures is the next reason why I want to bring this overview of the entire scope of philosophy to light earlier than would otherwise have been my intention.' Without the appointment to a professorship and the consequent need to give lectures, Hegel's third and most comprehensive major work would not have come into being.

However, not only was the *Encyclopedia* written in Heidelberg, but its connections to Heidelberg are even closer. They lead to Hegel's friend Friedrich

Creuzer, who was instrumental in his appointment. Creuzer was one of the most important and productive classical philologists of the 19th century. His fame is twofold: in his century, he was the most important scholarly interpreter of the mythological tradition of mankind, not only of Greek mythology, but also of the mythologies of Egypt, the Ancient Orient and India – in short: Creuzer could be jestfully called 'the first Heidelberg Center for Transcultural Studies.' In addition, he re-edited the writings of the two great Neo-Platonic philosophers of late antiquity, Plotinus and Proclus, which until then had only been available in the outdated first editions from the Renaissance, and thus produced scientifically reliable, exemplary text editions. Creuzer also translated Plotinus into German. All this was important for Hegel: Creuzer's philosophically-inspired interpretation of mythology became important for Hegel's philosophy of religion. Above all, however, Hegel joined forces with Creuzer with regards to the promotion of Neo-Platonism in quite a literal sense: Hegel collaborated on Creuzer's Proklos edition and even contributed textual conjecture. Hegel had already been familiar with Neo-Platonism since his student days in Tübingen and had intensively engaged in Neo-Platonic thinking in Jena, but it was only the collaboration with Creuzer that ignited Hegel's spark of enthusiasm into a blazing fire.

3.2 Neoplatonic Inspiration

Neo-Platonism is the only philosophy before Hegel which, in a comparable way, sums up the entire preceding philosophy in a comprehensive synthesis. Already Plotinus and Proklos are guided by the thought that the history of philosophy is to be understood as an event of truth. It is the spirit, which knows itself eternally as the immortal truth, which steps out of its eternity into the forms of finitude in world and history, in order to regain itself recognizably in the historical course of philosophical thinking, whereby it returns 'into the unity of its fullness' (Hegel). Hegel therefore calls Neo-Platonism the first 'intellectual system' and writes about it: 'Philosophy had reached the point of view where self-consciousness knew itself in its thinking as the absolute.' This characterization applies equally to Hegel's own philosophy. He understood his thought as the rebirth of Neo-Platonism under the conditions of modernity – and this reference to the ancient model gives his *Encyclopedia* its signature: it is the key to its understanding.

Hegel's orientation towards Neo-Platonism is already apparent externally in the *Encyclopedia*'s structure. It consists of three parts: a sharply pointed summary of logic as the metaphysical basis of the system is followed by the real philosophy, which is divided into two parts: the philosophy of nature and the philosophy of spirit. The philosophy of spirit, which is not only the third and concluding part of the *Encyclopedia*, but also the most important and original, is again divided into three parts: subjective spirit, objective spirit and absolute spirit. And also the philosophy of absolute spirit is again divided into three parts: namely, art, revealed religion and

philosophy. These tripartitions are not a 'trick,' but they follow a Neo-Platonic model, a triad, which already for Plotinus and Proclus provides the key to the structure and inner life of spirit.

Plotinus and Proclus understand spirit as the self-development of divine Oneness. However, unity does not merge into multiplicity and get lost in the unitless many. Rather, in this unfolding movement, the One, in passing through the world of multiplicity, returns to itself as unity, and in this return to itself, it understands itself as spirit. The overall movement of the self-development of the divine One and its return to itself therefore forms a three-step sequence: in the beginning, there is the still unevolved One of the origin; then comes the self-development into the multiplicity of the world through self-division and differentiation; and then it finds completion in the return to itself as spirit. In the terminology of the Neo-Platonists, this three-step is called mone – prohodos – epistrophe; mone – 'remaining' is the original inwardness of the One as origin; prohodos – 'emergence' is the unfolding in difference and multiplicity; epistrophe – 'return' is the coming back of unity to itself as thinking and recognizing itself. Hegel already takes up this Neo-Platonic terminology by notoriously speaking of a return to oneself whenever there is talk of thinking, of self-consciousness, of concept, of idea or spirit. This too is good Neo-Platonism: Plotinus already equated the triad 'to stay' – 'to go forth' – 'to return' or 'unity' – 'division' – 'fulfilment' with the triad 'to be' – 'life' – 'spirit,' which goes back to Plato. 'To be' stands for the unfolded unity of the origin. 'Life' for self-development through disunion. 'Spirit' for the return to oneself and thus for a fulfilled unity, which brings back, preserves and abolishes all unfolded multiplicity in oneself and thus delimits itself into infinite unity. Spirit is thus essentially a return to oneself, namely as a return to a unity that unfolds all fullness and all richness in itself but preserves itself in this unity. This return 'to oneself and into the unity of its fullness' (Hegel) is self-consciousness, knowledge of oneself and thinking of oneself.

The point of these Neo-Platonic triads, however, is that the three steps of this trinity do not simply follow one another. Instead, they pass through each other: they form a single, self-penetrating unity in which each moment contains the other two moments and thus holds the whole triad within itself. 'Being' is thus not an extra-mental, primordial rock without life and spirit, but it is the unity that already has life and spirit within itself and is folded into the unity of the origin. 'Life' is the self-differentiation of this unity, which contains both the unity of the origin and the return to it in itself, but now in the mode of disunion, of differentiation into the diversity of moments. And 'spirit' is the unity returned to itself through its unfolding, which contains both the unfolded unity of the origin and its self-development within itself, in the mode of knowing itself. Thus, spirit is at the same time being and life, as its self-knowing unity. Life is at the same time being and spirit as the unity of their unfolding. And being is at the same time life and spirit as the unity of their unfolding. This self-penetrating triad, in which every moment is all and the whole, 'so that all is all and each is each

and each is all' (Plotinus), is the self-thinking divine spirit. And exactly in this way Hegel understands God as the absolute idea and absolute spirit. The much better-known three-step of thesis, antithesis and synthesis, on the other hand, is nowhere to be found in Hegel's work; it is the Marxist vulgarization of Neo-Platonic and Hegelian thought, which has not understood that its concern is the spirit as the self-relation of Oneness.

Hegel's *Encyclopedia* represents the triune unity of the divine spirit in the system of philosophy. Its three-part structure corresponds to this: its first part, logic, corresponds to the 'mone' – the remaining within oneself of the origin. For its theme is the divine spirit in its pre- and supernatural unity as an absolute idea – in Hegel's own words it is the 'representation of God as he is in his eternal being before the creation of nature and a finite spirit.' The second part, the philosophy of nature, corresponds to 'prohodos' – the world-setting process in the forms of multiplicity and difference. For nature is the divine spirit in its self-alienation and self-ending – in Hegel's famous formulation nature is 'the idea in its otherness.' According to Hegel, and thus long before Darwin and completely without materialistic implications, the essential characteristic of nature is evolution. This is because development and unfolding, which characterize all living things, are not only a divergence in multiplicity and difference, but also an elementary form of self-relationship; the evolution of life is therefore completed in the formation of consciousness. The third part, the philosophy of spirit, corresponds to the epistrophe – the return to the origin and thus to oneself. For Hegel, the spirit is the return of the divine idea from its otherness 'to itself and into the unity of its fullness.' The structure of the *Encyclopedia* and therefore of Hegel's philosophy follows that Neo-Platonic three-step in which the life of the divine spirit is carried out as the return of unity through its self-development to itself. The point of this construction, which is the point of both Hegelian and Neo-Platonic philosophy, lies in the insight that God is spirit so that the spirit is the absolute and perfect, and, ultimately even the only, reality.

The culmination of the final third part of the system, the philosophy of spirit, is Hegel's insight into the unity of concrete human spirit with the divine absolute spirit. The philosophy of spirit describes the same Neo-Platonic three-step. Its first part deals with the subjective spirit, that is, the mind. It analyzes the progressive self-internalization of life, which takes place in a gradual sequence from the soul through consciousness, self-consciousness and reason, in order to reach absolute inwardness in spirit. Subjective mind is thus the staying inward of spirit. The second part deals with the objective spirit. It represents the self-expression and self-realization of spirit in history. The stages at which spirit historically coagulates into objectivity are law, morality and ethical life; and in its highest form, the state as a constitutional state, spirit attains its complete objectification in the form of an institution of reason. But world history, in which the states rise and fall, at the same time shows and executes the finitude of this form of spirit – and this makes it the last judgment. The third part deals with absolute spirit. As absolute spirit, the spirit returns from the two forms of its finiteness as subjective and objective spirit into its essential infinity and thus

back to itself. He thus frees himself from his finitude, but in such a way that he contains the finitude and its forms as suspended moments of passage of his return to himself. The infinity of absolute spirit is therefore also not opposed to the finitude of subjective and objective spirit, but encompasses and overlaps it in itself as transit stations on the way to itself. Absolute spirit is an infinity that overlaps the forms of the finite, permeates them with its own infinity and thus delimits them, transfigures them, so to speak, metaphysically. Therefore the human spirit is not opposed to the divine spirit; rather, it is the passageway through which the divine spirit comes to itself. Hegel sees this in such a way that the self-knowledge of God as spirit is carried out through the knowledge of God by man. In our knowledge of God, God knows himself. Man's knowledge of God in turn takes place in the three forms of art, religion and philosophy. In art, the divine becomes present to us in sensual perception. In the Christian religion of revelation, we imagine God as the trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit and as the Creator, who faces us and the world, but is also present in his church. In philosophy, finally, we understand God as the all-encompassing triune unity of remaining within oneself, self-development and return to oneself, and thus as spirit in the sense in which Hegel and before him the Neo-Platonists understand spirit.

The self-knowledge of absolute spirit thus takes place through art, religion and philosophy as the forms of human knowledge of God. Hegel's notion of this intertwining of our knowledge of God with the self-knowledge of God is, however, completely misunderstood if one interprets it as if the transcendence of God were thereby reduced to the immanence of the concrete human consciousness and its acts of knowledge – this is how the left-wing Hegelians, e.g. Feuerbach and Marx, interpreted it. Hegel means the complete opposite: in the knowledge of God as Spirit, the finitude of human consciousness is overcome, and this happens precisely through the realization that spirit is by its very nature an all-encompassing infinite unity and that we ourselves as thinking spirit are therefore also infinite and so as infinite spirit ourselves, we no longer differ from God as infinite spirit. In his lectures on the philosophy of religion, Hegel quotes Meister Eckhart, the great Neo-Platonic mystic, who says: 'The eye in which I see God, it is the same eye in which God sees me, my eye and God's eye, that is *one* eye and *one* recognition and *one* life.'

3.3 The Origins of Spirit's Self-Knowing

The idea of spirit thus stands at the centre of Hegel's entire philosophy. He accordingly writes in the *Encyclopedia*:

> The Absolute is spirit; this is the highest definition of the Absolute. To find this definition and to comprehend its meaning and content, this, one can say, was the absolute tendency of all education and philosophy; all religion and science has urged itself towards this point; from this urge alone is world history to be comprehended.

He adds, 'the word and the concept of spirit was found early on,' and he ends his *Encyclopedia* with an uncommented quotation from the metaphysics of Aristotle in the original Greek text, whose statements about the highest, most perfect and divine spirit as a pure activity and thinking of itself is distinguished by Hegel as the ultimate and conclusive insight of all philosophy. Hegel could hardly have expressed his connection to ancient spiritual metaphysics more clearly. The Aristotle quotation is the passage in which Plotinus already found the absolute self-relation of divine spirit as the triune unity of being, life and thought in the classical sense.

Hegel therefore does not think of spirit as an individual thinking subject, as Descartes and Leibniz had done. Nor does he understand spirit as the transcendental subjectivity that Kant, Fichte and early Schelling had defined as the uniform and general structure of all thinking subjects. To Hegel, both the individual subject and transcendental subjectivity belong to the realm of subjective mind, that is, to a finite form of mind. Spirit itself in its infinity, on the other hand, is the absolute totality of all determinations of being and thinking – or in Hegel's triadic version: of being, essence and concept. Hegel stresses again and again that spirit as totality of all determinations can only be understood speculatively. What does that mean?

Speculum means mirror. A mirror is pure showing: it shows itself by showing the world. It doubles things. But the things in the mirror are identical in content with the things of which they are mirror images. That is why the mirror enables cognition, and precisely the cognition of what would otherwise remain hidden, and whatever remains hidden in our normal world view. We do not see ourselves when we look into the world, but we do when we look into the mirror. Plato had already used the mirror as a metaphor for self-knowledge. Just as we see ourselves in the pupil of the friend when we look into his eyes, so do we see ourselves and the friend at the same time and in a single glance; so does the soul recognize itself when it looks at God, and in such a way that it sees itself in God and sees God in itself – as Plato describes in his famous eye parable. We have already seen how Hegel and Meister Eckhart take this up: the mirror is a medium of knowledge as we see in it what is normally separated and opposed – inside and outside, the seen image and we ourselves as those who see, object and subject – we see these in one unity at once. At the same time, the mirror is a medium of infinity – namely of infinity in the specifically Hegelian sense, in that in it the finite is not simply erased and destroyed, but is permeated with infinity and thereby de-limited. If we place two mirrors exactly opposite each other, then when we look into one of these mirrors and see a multiplication into infinity; the seen image in its definiteness does not disappear and does not blur, it remains in all its sharpness, but it is permeated with infinity. The view into this mirrored infinity has something peculiarly blissful about it – that is why the Baroque loved mirror rooms and mirror cabinets so much. By the way, it is not possible to photograph this infinite rapport. Only the living human eye, our spirit-gifted vision, sees infinity, the dead machine cannot.

Now, Hegel calls a kind of cognition '*speculative*' when it thinks the opposing determinations, which are mutually exclusive in their opposition and are finite precisely for this reason, in such a way that they are mutually contained in each other in an infinite unity and are freed from their finitude precisely because of this; they are then 'reflected in themselves,' as Hegel says – just as in the infinite rapport of opposing mirrors. They are an infinite unity, and no longer a separate many. This also includes the insight that opposition as a relationship is itself already a form of unity. In speculative recognition, we realize that there is no object without subject and no subject without object, no world without I and no I without world, no identity without difference and no difference without identity, no being without thinking and no thinking without being, no God without soul and no soul without God. And it is precisely in this realization of the infinite unity of the opposites mirrored into one another that we realize what spirit is – and this is realized when we comprehend what infinite unity is: it is a unity that returns to itself. The essence of the spirit is therefore 'the absolute unity of the opposites in the concept': 'concept' being a *terminus technicus* Hegel uses to describe the thinking that understands itself, that is a thinking, which recognizes itself precisely in the infinite unity of the opposites contained in each other and that is therefore unlimited.

Speculative thinking and cognition is thus the opposite of the rationality of the understanding, which always thinks every single determination only in its one-sidedness and finitude, that is in its particularity, in which it excludes its opposition from itself. Precisely by this means, it fixes itself in its finitude. Its dialectical unity with its opposition and, finally, with all other determinations is thereby faded out. For Hegel, the rationality of understanding has something psychopathic about it. It forces us to keep the opposites apart and thus always lets us think only of the individual and the finite; it literally does not see the forest for the trees, it only ever sees a single tree. The understanding forgets that it is the activity of keeping the opposites apart and that in this activity, it contains within itself the separated opposites.

Rationality is constitutively self-forgetting, precisely because it is fixated on objects. The understanding cannot think itself as the all-encompassing unity of the whole and God that it is. When it becomes clear to it that it is itself the activity of keeping apart and, therefore, that it is the unity of the opposites that are kept apart, then, with this very fact, the understanding perishes and rises into speculative reason; the death of understanding is, thus, the life of reason. But this insight can only take place in a turning to oneself. And understanding, in its fixation on objects, is incapable of such self-attainment; it loses itself in its devotion to objects and in their finite particularity. The understanding is the view of the world without a mirror. Speculative reason, on the other hand, is the infinite mirror; its turning to

itself does not let it lose the world, but rather, it contains it mirrored and thus delimited in infinite unity.

Hegel accuses modern philosophy of having reduced thinking to the rationality of understanding and thus to conceive of thinking in a one-sided manner as only finite and subjective. Hegel directs this reproach at the rationalist metaphysics of modern times, which treats God, the whole and the thinking ego as objects – even as objects different from one another – and precisely because of this fails to recognize their true essence, namely their infinite unity. And Hegel directs the same criticism at Kant's *Critique of Reason*, which destroyed rationalist metaphysics. Admittedly, Kant had understood that thinking itself first constitutes all the objects that it thinks – but to Hegel, Kant then draws the wrong conclusion when he critically limits the possibilities of reason's ability to cognize. Hegel's Kant thus considers thinking, just like the rationalist metaphysics that he criticizes, to be a subjective activity of the finite subjective mind. Therefore, neither the rationalist metaphysics of understanding nor Kant have a sufficient concept of mind and thinking. 'Kant,' Hegel writes, 'thinks in his criticism only of the state of the metaphysics of the time before him … he neither considered nor examined the truly speculative ideas of older philosophers about the concept of the mind.'

Hegel thus finds the true insight into the infinite and supra-representational nature of mind and thought in ancient philosophy: in Plato and Aristotle, but above all in Plotinus and Proklos and then in Meister Eckhart. Hegel's concept of the history of philosophy as the path of spirit towards knowledge of itself in time is thus anything but a program of progress. For Hegel, history is not an ascending line of progress, at whose peak he stands himself. He has never believed that only he himself, and only he himself, has recognized the full truth. The fact that of the three large volumes of his lectures on the history of philosophy, two alone are devoted to antiquity and only the narrower third volume deals with the Middle Ages and modern times together, literally speaks volumes. Hegel understands his own thinking as a return to the ancient insights into the nature of God, into spirit and thought, and he does this through an extremely arduous process of reclaiming these ancient insights. This involves extremely hard work of thought, because he must work through the pathologies of modernity in order to uncover the ancient wisdom again. To Hegel, true progress is the return to the origin – and he learned this from the Neo-Platonists.

Still, these old insights are old because they have always been known to thought itself. That is why they are universal. Hegel is far from believing that spirit has recognized itself in its true, infinite essence only in Europe – even if this is repeatedly said of him. Regarding the central mystery of the spirit that is the insight into the inseparable unity of our thinking self with God, Hegel quotes Meister Eckhart in his lectures on philosophy of

religion. In the later editions of his *Encyclopedia*, however, Hegel quotes the Bhagavad Gita and the Persian mystic Jalal ad-Din Rumi. Indian and Islamic mysticism know what Eckhart and the Neo-Platonists know – and what modern rationalism does not know, nor does the master thinker Kant. It may be that Heidelberg and his friend Creuzer contributed to this widening of spirit, which we can still see alive in Heidelberg today.

4 Philosophy as the Science of Freedom

Luca Illetterati

Introduction[1]

In the Remark to § 5 from the Heidelberg edition of the *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*, Hegel claims that philosophy 'can also be regarded as the science of freedom,' for in it, 'the foreignness of objects and, thus, the finiteness of the symphony of consciousness would disappear.' Through this movement of disappearance in philosophy, 'dependence, longing and fear' would disappear,[2] i.e. all forms of external attachment or determination that prevent the free development of thought.

In the paragraphs that follow, Hegel explains why philosophy must adopt an encyclopedic configuration. The encyclopedia is a form of exposition of the system, which is not simply one of the organizational forms of philosophical knowledge nor it is just convenient for didactic or communication purposes. For Hegel, the system is a necessary feature of philosophy, and it means science:

> **A philosophizing *without a system* can be nothing scientific (Enz. A, § 7 An.).**

In this essay, I want to clarify this connection between system and freedom and show that the two concepts support each other and, according to Hegel, one includes the other. For him, the system is far from something that forces, restrains or confines thought, but is the only way to express and demonstrate the experience of freedom that is at stake in philosophy.

To demonstrate this connection, I will focus (Sections 4.1 and 4.2) on the concept of philosophy as a science characterized by presuppositionlessness and, therefore, on the relationship between philosophy and

1 I would like to very thank Giulia Bernard for discussing the text with me and for suggesting some much better formulations than those I had initially proposed.

2 G. W. F. Hegel, *Encyclopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse*, Oßwald, Heidelberg 1817, § 5. The work is abbreviated with Enz. A, followed by the number of the paragraph and the abbreviation An., if this is the note following the paragraph.

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presuppositions. On the basis of the results achieved, I will address the specific dynamics that characterize philosophy and make it the science of freedom. This examination will allow me, first, to explore the extent to which the concept of freedom underlies the necessity for the absolute idea to divide inwardly into a diversity that merges the different parts of the system (Sections 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5). Second, it will show how the the form of rationality embodied in in the system finds its deepest roots precisely in the idea of freedom (4.6). I will conclude the paper (4.7) by trying to demonstrate in what sense the absoluteness to which Hegel refers is a declination of the concept of freedom.

4.1 Science and Presuppositionlessness

When Hegel states that philosophy is the science of freedom, he does not mean that philosophy is the science whose proper object is 'freedom.' This would deviate from what Hegel considers to be the paradoxical nature of philosophy, according to which philosophy has no object already 'given' that can be considered its object of examination.

Already in the first paragraph of the *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*, Hegel is involved in the – one might say – metaphilosophical operation of explaining and defining the concept of philosophy.

The strategy he adopts in this operation of clarification and determination is a negative strategy that separates philosophy from the fields of knowledge that differ from it, showing to what extent philosophy cannot be considered one instance among others in that same field:

> **All sciences, other than philosophy, have such objects which are assumed to have been directly admitted by the representation; therefore, also in the beginning of science as accepted, just as also the determinations considered necessary in the further course are taken up from the representation.**
>
> **(Enz. A, § 1)**

Compared with various scientific disciplines, which find their objects to be provided already in the representation and which, therefore, need not be justified regarding their own determination, philosophy primarily is an experience of emptiness, having neither a given field of exclusive competence, nor an object that determines it.

However, the fact that philosophy is not a particular science – such as physics, linguistics, archaeology or botany – does not mean for Hegel (e.g. Wittgenstein, when he rejects the possibility of thinking of philosophy as a scientific discipline) that philosophy is not knowledge. On the contrary, according to Hegel, philosophy is not a particular science precisely because

it is knowledge placed on a level of radicality that no particular science can achieve.3

What distinguishes this knowledge is that philosophy cannot presuppose anything, cannot take anything for granted and cannot rely on any element that can be accepted as indisputable and firm. In this first still-negative moment, a point comes to light that is one of the most problematic, yet most significant, aspects of Hegel's way of understanding philosophy: the *presuppositionless* (*Voraussetzungslosigkeit*).[4] This presuppositionless is not at all the naive calling of a genuine, uncontaminated, pure and innocent original space in which one possibly could gain the true exterior of any ideological contamination. For Hegel, the notions of the uncontaminated – of purity and innocence – are intellectualistic (and ideological) attitudes of a thought that imagines it is enough to close one's eyes to the world to be unscathed by the dynamics of the latter – and fails though, for this very reason, to take time and history seriously. The presuppositionless Is therefore not a quiet state or place thinking is in possess of, but it is rather the attitude itself of philosophy, its exercise and that which comprises it as an activity in the proper sense. To put it even more clearly, presuppositionless is the movement itself that characterizes philosophical action, which is why, from the beginning, it is something that questions the very basis of this movement, subjects it to a radical critique, and ultimately sublates it.

For Hegel, philosophy is that gesture which, at the moment it establishes itself, also sublates itself; it is an activity that strives first and foremost to remove the ground on which it rests to be able to present itself as an activity. For philosophy cannot take its objects, nor its method, for granted and, therefore, can even less establish from the outset its content and the form which takes its discourse. In this regard, Hegel notes that consideration of both the object and the method must fall 'within philosophy itself.'[5]

Thus, philosophy presents itself as a paradoxical, reflexive dynamic, according to which its first action turns to the negation of the presuppositions that made it possible:

3 Just as there is no reduction of philosophy to the way of being of the particular sciences, in Hegel, there is no claim to dissolve the work of the various sciences within philosophy. According to Hegel, the kind of knowledge that is active in the different sciences is completely adequate in relation to what they are meant to do. The criticism on the sciences intervenes only on the basis of the metaphysical presuppositions that the sciences carry within themselves.

4 This is effectively pointed out in S. Houlgate, *The Opening of Hegel's Logic. From Being to Infinity* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2006). About Logic as presuppositionless science, see M. Hentrup, "Hegel's Logic as Presuppositionless Science", Idealistic Studies, 49, 2, (Summer 2019), pp. 145–65.

5 Enz. A, § 3.

The beginning of philosophy, on the other hand, has the discomfort that already its object is inevitably subjected to doubt and dispute (Enz. A, § 2).

4.2 The Sublating of Presupposition

However, that philosophy is presuppositionless does not mean that it has nothing to do with presuppositions. On the contrary, this lack of presuppositions is the product of a dynamic always at work that philosophy performs on itself and, thus, on its own presuppositions, or on that world of ideas, i.e. more or less refined concepts within which philosophy, as part of language, necessarily moves.

The presuppositions generally understood are representations that are mostly accepted as true, but are, nevertheless, not justified as true. If representations constitute the world of presuppositions, i.e. the world in which the thinking subject always has been, then philosophy embodies the movement that leads from representation (the unjustified) toward the concept (the justified), or, to say in other words, toward a process of sublation, that questions the very presuppositional nature of representation.

It must be emphasized here that although it is true that philosophy is the sublation of the presuppositional character of representation, precisely for this very reason, the representation's form is simultaneously the condition of possibility for the movement of philosophical discourse.[6]

However, if philosophy is not only exempt from the presupposition being a constitutive element for its own development – as the spirit only can develop further toward the concept through the representations and work on them – then to what extent does philosophy differ from the other forms of scientific knowledge, which proceed from an object already at hand in the representation?

By accepting presupposition not as something simply given, but as something that must be discussed, problematized and justified already, philosophy, according to Hegel, has sublated itself as a presupposition. The moment the presupposition is recognized as such and not simply taken for granted, it is no longer a presupposition.

In this sense, the difference between philosophy and the other forms of knowledge (as well as the difference between philosophy and religion, even if it brings with it irreducible peculiarities) seems to take place precisely in relation to a different attitude toward the presupposition. Compared with

6 On the particular dynamics of the relationship in Hegel between representation and concept, cf. W. De Vries, "Hegel in Representation and Thought", Idealistic Studies, 17, 2, 1987, pp. 123–32; K. Brinkmann, "Hegel on Translating Representation: Rethinking the Task of Philosophy", in L. Fonnesu, L. Ziglioli (Eds), System und Logik bei Hegel, (Hildesheim, Zürich, New York: Olms, 2016), pp. 43–62.

the forms of discourse that move within the presupposition assumed as given, philosophy, one might say, recognizes the presupposition by grasping it not as something given, but as something posited. The first action of philosophy, which is obviously constitutive for its own determination and meaning, thereby brings with it the opening up to the awareness of pre-understanding (and, thus, the presuppositional world) within which it moves. Only in this opening does it find the conditions under which it can free itself from the presupposition, which it really is itself, i.e. it effectively acts like a presupposition, only in so far as it is not known and, therefore, not thought of as such.

That Hegel does not view the presupposition naively is supported by some brief, but important, remarks that he made about the relationship between thought and language.[7]

Thought expresses itself in language, a form of organization that, through its grammatical and syntactical structures, pre-determines and delimits from the very beginning all of the subject's experience in the world, thereby creating a form of presupposition and preconception (an *unconscious logic*) that philosophy cannot but adopt. Hegel is so aware of this necessity that in the Second Preface to the *Science of Logic*, he writes that if 'the forms of thought are first set out and stored in human *language*,' then

> in everything that the human being has interiorised, in everything that in some way or other has become for him a representation, in whatever he has made his own, there has language penetrated, and everything that he transforms into language and expresses in it contains a category, whether concealed, mixed or well-defined.
>
> [WdL I,10 (12)]

If language is already a kind of pre-categorization of reality, then philosophy, as thinking that expresses itself in language, also moves in that form of pre-understanding that lies in and is active in language. However, in this way, philosophy does not perceive language as something neutral, as if it were simply an innocent harmless medium of expression for something given, which, in its translation to linguistic form would remain impermeable and unshorn, i.e. as if language were only the instrument that would bring to expression a ready-made spiritual content, thus being independent and separate from it. On the contrary, philosophy does not assume language as it is: being aware that the latter is already a way of organizing reality and

7 On the relationship between thinking and language in Hegel, and also for a cross-section of the main interpretations of the problem, see J. O'Neil Surber (Ed.), *Hegel and Language* (Albany: State University of New York Press 2006); J. Vernon, *Hegel's Philosophy of Language*(London: Bloomsbury, 2007); M. N. Forster, *German Philosophy of Language: From Schlegel to Hegel,* (Oxford University Press 2013), pp. 143–250.

having understood its character of presupposition, philosophy has already taken the first step towards the sublation of the presupposition itself.

In a way, Hegel's attitude toward language is not so far removed from Nietzsche's conviction that grammar is the most deeply rooted bastion of metaphysics. According to Nietzsche, if one wants to deconstruct the more lasting foundations of the value system that metaphysics represents, what is to be taken as the object of criticism is the grammar within which metaphysics has sedimented and that acts in an unreflected and unconscious way, and in the most radical and profound way, in humans' lives, shaping the very forms of thinking. Science, morality and metaphysics are based on this apparently neutral, but in fact decisive, *faith in grammar*. For Nietzsche, grammar comprises a system that tends to place within stable and fixed frames that which is in continuous evolution, providing a scaffold of apparent timeless solidity to what it is, only in so far as it is in the flow of time. Therefore, as Nietzsche complains in *The Twilight of Idols*, 'I fear we are not getting rid of God because we still believe in grammar'[8] (TWI, 48).

On one hand, grammar – which Nietzsche, as is well known, also considers a superstition or a popular belief – arises as an expression of the need for humans to rise from the constant flow of the becoming of all things, but on the other hand, it produces the false, albeit reassuring, image of a world inhabited by metaphysical substances, which originate from or are the effects of grammatical logic. In Wittgenstein's words – which, in this sense, are in line with Nietzsche – one also could say that metaphysics is not so much laid down in propositions that say this or that, but rather lie in a language, i.e. in a deeper structure – in a grammar. In this sense, the task of philosophical activity, according to Wittgenstein, is precisely not so much to relate to this or that metaphysical statement to show the deception or inconsistency of a certain belief, but rather to unravel (*durchpflügen*) the entire language because 'an entire mythology is laid down in our language'[9] (PO, 199).

The issues for Hegel are somewhat different. According to him, it is not so much a question of abandoning, as Nietzsche states, faith in grammar It is rather a matter of considering grammar from a rational perspective and of criticizing its unquestioned nature. One is asked, therefore, to reflect critically on the logical structures and ontological and epistemological assumptions that have been deposited in language. This in turn allows to become aware of the hierarchies and relational systems that social and intersubjective practices have stored in linguistic structures. This becoming aware is

8 See F. Nietzsche, *Götzen-Dämmerung oder Wie man mit dem Hammer philosophirt*, VI/3, S. 73 (*Twilight of the Idols* III.5, trans. Duncan Large, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988, p. 19).

9 L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Occasions 1912–1951*, ed. by J.C. Klagge and A. Nordman, (Indianapolis: Hacket 1993), p. 199.

obviously not an act that leaves things untouched. Relating to something in the awareness of the presuppositional structures through which the thing has opened up to our gaze is far from considering it as if that presuppositional framework were never there.

4.3 The Dynamics of Philosophy

For Hegel, the fact that philosophy cannot work without starting from presuppositions – and from the presupposition of language in the first place – does not mean that philosophy, as a conscious working on the presuppositional world from which it moves, lets presuppositions stand as such, untouched in their form. Philosophical thought is structured in such a way that the necessary and inevitable presuppositions from which it proceeds must be subjected to discussion and, thus, find their criticism and justification in the necessity of conceptual development.

The gesture of Hegelian thinking can be understood as a process that is specified in three inseparable and interwoven dynamics:

a) A dynamic of clarifying the unconscious logic laid down within our language
b) A dynamic of criticism of the presuppositions revealed and brought to the surface by the process of clarification
c) A dynamic of conceptual redefining in a justification process generated by the unfolding of thought determinations

Thus, Hegel's definition of *philosophy* as the science of freedom can be understood as a rearrangement of the concept of presuppositionless. Philosophy is the science of freedom, as it is intended to reveal the presuppositional world in which human discourse takes place, freeing this discourse from the presuppositional bond and re-determining it through a process of justification that removes the presupposition from itself.

Philosophy is therefore a form of discourse that cannot structurally, to be itself, rest on some foundation that can be assumed as such. It is a form of knowledge with an essential and problematic characteristic: it cannot be grounded on anything external to it, i.e. it cannot rest on anything outside itself nor it can refer to any external instance that would legitimize it.[10] If the definition of philosophy as the science of freedom is seriously and rigorously understood, then it follows that philosophy is, in a sense, an unfounded scientific process.

10 On Hegel's nonfoundational attitude, see W. Maker, *Philosophy Without Foundations: Rethinking Hegel* (Albany: SUNY Press 1994); S. Houlgate, "Hegel's Critique of Foundationalism in the 'Doctrine of Essence,'" 'Hegel Bulletin,' 20, 1-2, 39–40, 1999, pp. 18–34.

And this is what makes it impossible to assimilate philosophy's way of being to the way of being of particular scientific disciplines. The fact that philosophy, in the Hegelian sense, cannot be considered, in the proper sense, a scientific discipline like other sciences depends not on a lack of scientificity for philosophy or on a form of scientific insufficiency. IOn the contrary, philosophy is not a scientific discipline like others inasmuch as it is science in the radical sense of the term. For Hegel, philosophy is a science of the whole, a science of the totality, i.e. a science that must have in itself its own foundation and must find its justification in nothing but the consequent unfolding of itself according to the necessity of its concept.

In all this, what might even seem paradoxical is the fact that if philosophy differs from other sciences precisely because it is the science of the whole and not of anything particular, this whole appears at the beginning as a void – a void that arises from the critical and skeptical attitude which rejects any givenness and that takes the form of the sublation of any value in stability and absoluteness from the given contents that the different forms of knowledge tend to assume as their own objects.

4.4 Thinking Freedom

This radical concept of science that philosophy embodies, for which it does not possess any subject matter delimiting its disciplinary domain, does not enjoy a foundation on which to base itself nor can it presuppose anything, not even the logical structure of the discourse within which it also takes place, which is what makes philosophy the science of freedom.

The concept of freedom is, as is well known, the energetic core from which philosophical discourse opens with Kant and develops in an extraordinarily radical way in Germany between the end of the 18th century and the first few years of the 19th century, finding in the thoughts of Fichte, Schelling and Hegel its most complex and problematic outcomes.[11]

To better understand what it means to Hegel that philosophy is the science of freedom, one first must refer to Kant, for whom, as is well known, 'the concept of freedom, insofar as its reality is proved by an apodictic law of practical reason, constitutes the keystone of the whole structure of a system of pure reason, even of speculative reason.'[12] If one seeks the origin of freedom's theoretical structure, it is somehow recognizable, according to Kant, in the form of beginning a state from itself, i.e. the different senses of freedom that Kant analyzes within his work coagulate: from *negative free-*

11 See F. Chiereghin, "Libertà", in L. Illetterati e P. Giuspoli (Eds.), Filosofia classica tedesca. Parole chiave, (Roma: Carocci, 2016). Chiereghin rightly points out that Schelling in particular thinks of the concept of freedom in its most radical and aporetic form.

12 I. Kant, *Critique of the Practical Reason*, trans. by M. Gregor, Intr. by Andrew Reath, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press2015), p. 3.

dom – i.e. freedom understood as 'independence from' – to freedom in the *positive* sense, as *freedom-for* – i.e. *autonomy* and *self-determination* – up to the 'freedom of', to the capacity to be the beginning that is connected to the element of *creativity*.[13]

In stating that philosophy is the science of freedom, Hegel first affirms that philosophy is a science that does not suffer from the condition of depending on an extraneousness assumed as a given, since philosophy is a science that does not depend on something else that performs the function of the foundation for its development. It is also a science that is necessarily the beginning of itself, that begins itself, as Hegel says. As philosophy cannot accept any foundation on which it is grounded, it is necessarily the beginning of itself, and as such it also can determine the concepts within which comprehension of the actuality that it produces is articulated. Therefore, the non-foundationalist attitude that philosophy embodies is the negative side of the auto-foundational movement that comprises the specific trait of philosophy, allowing it to be simultaneously a possibility of creation, or rather a redetermination on new bases of content that have passed through the criticism of its finiteness.

Therefore, to be the science of freedom does not mean being a science of something, but rather to be that continuous and incessant process of denial of all authoritative instances external to reason to which, according to the foundationalist approach that Hegel seeks to unbuild and deconstruct from within, reason should adapt to be able to draw the truth. The instances philosophy cannot accept may be in the form of some revelation, or in the results of some particular science, or more explicitly in the injunctions of some determined authority, or even, on a more decidedly theoretical level, in the form of an objectivity assumed to be true, of experience as the tribunal of truth, and of a subjectivity that claims to be untestable..

In this sense, the critical discussion of these positions that Hegel, in the preliminary conception to *Science of Logic* in the Berlin editions of the encyclopedia, calls the 'positions of thought towards objectivity' is a true deconstruction of the various foundational models of philosophy, i.e. of those types of rational-discourse structuring that seek a guarantee from something outside of reason on which reason depends.

The positions of thought that Hegel takes into consideration are: 1. metaphysics; 2. (a) empiricism and (b) critical philosophy; and 3. immediate knowing. For metaphysics, the foundation on which it relies is the (unjustified) belief in the identity of being and thinking, that the determinations of being are also determinations of thought. For empiricism, the foundation of truth is the experience in its singularity conceived as separate from the very process of thought. For critical philosophy, the foundation becomes the *a*

13 See F. Chiereghin, *Il problema della libertà in Kant* (Trento: Pubblicazioni di Verifiche, 1991).

priori form of the transcendental subject, which is what gives the world meaning and significance. For immediate knowing, the foundation of truth is again faith, something capable of going beyond the limits of finite thought, which, precisely because it is finite, cannot grasp the truth of things.

In all these positions, philosophy finds the foundation of truth in something other than itself, in something on which to rely. But in this sense, the truth in all these positions is dependent on something else.

To provide a concept of truth that is not based on anything else, it is necessary to develop a system that is based on itself, its own movement and its own activity, i.e. a dynamic totality of relations in which the parts sustain and justify each other.

4.5 Science as Freedom

Therefore, for Hegel, philosophy is essentially a system precisely because it is this process of justification that cannot be linked to any external authority with regard to its own progress. It is a system because it is a science of freedom: Outside the system, there is only the possibility of a foundation that would be a presupposition for philosophy, a form of dependence, of adaptation, i.e. all the instances with which philosophy deals critically.

To have a system, it is necessary for the elements that comprise it to be related according to a certain structure or organizational form from which these elements assume meaning. In the case of a simple juxtaposition of elements collected together outside a relational link that binds them to each other, according to Hegel, we are talking about 'aggregates,' not systems. In the aggregate, unlike in the system, the elements are already at hand, i.e. each part is autonomous and separate from the others, remaining substantially the same, whether it is considered within the aggregate or thought of as independent from it.

In a system, each part realizes its special nature only within a whole, which is the relational unity of its parts. In particular, in a philosophical system such as Hegel's (but also Kant's, if one assumes what he affirms in the Transcendental Doctrine of the Method of the *Critique of Pure Reason*), It is crucial the relationship bonding its members to the whole. The objects that appear in the philosophical system cannot be understood as independent entities that form the limited content of a particular discipline, but always as moments of an organized totality that, although they can be represented as different, only acquire form and rational meaning in the systematic whole in which they appear. Therefore, in the system, the contents are the result of the relational process of, and thus do not precede, philosophical investigation.

The system's unity is only possible if those who appear as independent sciences, i.e. the same parts into which the system is divided, are understood as 'fluid moments' that can provide a certain form to their particular content to the extent that they simultaneously acknowledge that the system

necessarily integrates itself into a 'higher [and wider] circle' than the scientific treatment:

> **Each of the parts of philosophy is a philosophical whole, a circle coming to closure within itself, but in each of its parts, the philosophical idea exists in a particular determinacy or element. The individual circle, simply because it is in itself a totality, also breaks through the boundary of its element and founds a further sphere. The whole, thus, presents itself as a circle of circles, each of which is a necessary moment, so that the system of its distinctive elements makes up the idea in its entirety, which appears equally in each one of them.**
>
> (Enz. 30, § 15)[14]

According to Hegel, the organizational model that comes closest to the philosophical system is the idea of an organic system. The organism's structure reflects the concrete structure of a system whose direction of development is not determined by information received from outside but is contained as the system's inner purpose. To say it with Kant, who is a sure reference to Hegel, the organism is a unity that is itself only in relation to its parts, which in turn are what they are only in their dynamic relation to the other parts and the whole. Likewise, the system of science is a unity that is realized only by its division into parts. These parts into which the unity is divided find their justification only in the relationship among themselves and to the whole. In such a system, the moment as such has no real independent nature and cannot be fully defined in itself, regardless of the relationships it entails and what form it takes. It only entails its determination as a member of a wider and more concrete circle of existence, to whose formation it contributes, and which generates and supports the development of this part by integrating it at ever more complex organizational levels.

Thus, the concept of the system in no way contradicts the definition of *philosophy* as the science of freedom. On the contrary, it is both its realization and its condition. If the science of freedom is a science that does not depend on any external authority or on any element, then the systematic structure, which in its dynamic and relational process is the justification for all its parts, is the proper form of the science displayed by philosophy.

Philosophy, according to Hegel, is such only if it is the science of freedom, but it necessarily must take the form of the system. Therefore, it must be a structure in which each proposition is related to the others and, thus, to the system's whole, so that each proposition finds its justification within

14 G.W.F. Hegel, *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline. Part I: Science of Logic,* trans. and ed. by Klaus Brinkmann and Daniel O'Dahlstrom (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

the logical contexts that articulate the system in its exposition, without one of the propositions vindicating a foundational role against the others:

> **A particular content is justified solely as a moment of the whole. When separated from it, it represents an unjustified presupposition or a subjective certainty (…). Through a *system,* one wrongly understands a philosophy built on a narrowly circumscribed *principle* distinct from other such principles. However, contrary to this, a principle of any genuine philosophy is that it contain all particular principles within itself.**
>
> **(Enz 30, § 14, An.)**

Thus, the system is the epistemological guarantee of the experience of radical freedom that philosophy expresses. Philosophy is, in its very nature, the rejection of any authoritative basis that lies outside the rational process that forms it, a basis being something either objective, i.e. an authority to which the subject should adapt, or something subjective, i.e. that mixture of desires, needs, pressures, values or ideologies that can drive the subject to shape reality according to them.

4.6 Decision for Thinking

That being said, it follows that the experience of freedom that philosophy expresses lies not in chance, but in the 'decision' to think purely of the only presupposition from which it takes its cue. A presupposition –one must note – lies in its very realization. This means that a decision made freely is the negation of the very form of the presupposition.

In § 78 of the *Science of Logic*, Hegel writes:

> **Similarly, all other presuppositions or prejudices must be surrendered at the entry to science, whether they be taken from representation or from thought. For it is in science that all such determinations must first be examined and the status of them and their oppositions recognised.**
>
> **(Enz. '30, § 78)**

However, one might ask: how does this revocation of all presuppositions and prejudices – in which the subject, by the way, is always immersed – take place? In his comment in the same paragraph, Hegel states:

> **The demand for such a consummate scepticism is the same as the demand that science ought to be preceded by *doubting everything,* i.e. by the complete *absence of any presupposition.* This demand is actually fulfilled in the resolve *to engage in pure thinking* and through the freedom that abstracts from everything and grasps its pure abstraction, the simplicity of thinking.**
>
> **(Enz. '30§78, An.)**

The decision (*Entschluß*) is an act of freedom that implies a discontinuity, an interruption. The decision is a negation in that it breaks the homogeneity that precedes it and simultaneously is an affirmation, in that in its production, it opens a new field of possibilities. If philosophy is a knowing that begins, the decision is in some way the act through which this beginning takes concrete form.

The decision to question everything and think purely makes science possible, particularly the logic understood as 'the science of the pure idea, that is, the idea in the abstract element of thought.' Pure thinking, which develops only by itself, requires that decision – that action of freedom that the negation of everything brings with it.

It is no coincidence that the decision that constituts the condition for the possibility of logic is found again at the end of logic, as its culminating action.

This is the final paragraph of the *Science of Logic*:

> **The idea, which is *for itself considered* in terms of this, its *unity* with itself, is *the process of intuiting* [*Anschauen*] and the idea insofar as it intuits is *nature*. As intuiting, however, the idea is posited by external reflection in a one-sided determination of immediacy or negation. Yet the absolute *freedom* of the idea is that it does not merely pass over into *life* or let life shine in itself as finite knowing, but instead, in the absolute truth of itself, *resolves to release* freely *from itself* the moment of its particularity or the first determining and otherness, the *immediate idea,* as its *reflection* [*Widerschein*], itself as *nature*.**
>
> **(§244)**

The absolute idea, as a result of the logical process, is fulfilled in an act of freedom that implies a decision. The use of the verbal forms *frei entlassen* and *sich entschließen* – which were immediately the subject of the most ferocious criticism of Schelling, as well as Trendelenburg, Feuerbach and Marx – seems to emphasize this transition's peculiarity, or rather the Hegelian need to differentiate this systematic place from all the previous steps that dialectical thinking has crossed within its development in the logic.[15]

To understand this tricky and problematic juncture, it is first necessary to consider that the idea being the subject of this process – which, starting from itself, resolves to release itself from itself in the form of its own otherness – is the absolute idea. In other words, the idea counts as the element where the whole path of logic is driven to completion and is for this very reason also the moment in which all the finite instances of external dependence that invalidated the first figures of the development of the idea (the

15 L. Illetterati, "La decisione dell'idea. L'idea assoluta e il suo 'passaggio' nella natura in Hegel", in 'Verifiche' XXXIV, 2005, pp. 239–72.

idea of life and the idea of knowledge), are sublated. Only in this way is the absolute idea the unity in which the determinations preceding it find their truth and, thus, the truth of the whole process. The absolute idea has as its object its own objectivity, that thinks itself, whose knowledge is no longer the tendency toward an exterior source but is aimed only at itself.

As it is a cognitive activity aimed at itself, the idea, therefore, is self-determined. Thus, for Hegel, it is 'all truth' and, therefore, 'the only object and content of philosophy' [WdL II, 236 (935)].

However, to say that the absolute idea is the whole truth and that it is the only object and content of philosophy does not imply that philosophy ends once and for all in it.

Properly speaking, to say that the absolute idea is the whole truth and, therefore, the only object and content of philosophy, means for Hegel at this level – i.e. once the absoluteness of the idea has been reached – that the task of philosophy is now to follow the idea's further configurations, that is to say the different shapes in which it is determined and particularized.

The transition from the absolute idea to nature reveals the need to know the idea beyond the logical sphere, where it was articulated in the element of pure thought without external constraints, and to face its development into forms that are not just intra-logical but neither are totally opposed to it: in nature and in spirit.

This implies that the absolute idea, for Hegel, is not resolved at all within the sphere of the purely logical and, therefore, within the sphere that is examined in the first part of the system. The logical idea is one of the modes in which the absolute idea finds its configuration. The way in which the absolute idea is a logical idea is that of being – in it, in its pure essence, enclosed in its concept, in a form which is not yet that of appearing in a specific determinacy. As a logical idea, it is, in Hegel's words, 'in pure thought, where difference is not yet otherness, but is and remains perfectly transparent to itself' [ibid. 237 (736)].

Even if the idea at the highest point of its development represents the completion of the process – which, with the decision on pure thinking and, thus, with being empty in 'its simple, unfilled immediacy' [WdL I, 62 (52)] is now 'also *fulfilled concept*, the *concept that comprehends* itself *conceptually*, being as the *concrete* and just as absolutely *intensive* totality' [WdL II, 252 (752)] – it nevertheless remains an idea, as it 'is still logical [....] it is shut up in pure thought, the science only of the divine *concept*' [WdL II, 253 (752)].

To fully being what it is, namely an activity that knows itself absolutely, the idea is subjective, and it knows itself concretely as an idea. For this very reason, the absolute idea cannot but be the impulse (Trieb) to overcome this closure and to set the 'the beginning of another sphere and science' (ibid.) where the idea is no longer in the pure element of thought but experiences the immediacy proper of nature.

Contrary to what Schelling seemed to find preposterous, the sublation of the sphere of the purely logical and the opening of the natural space

as a form of the idea are not, for Hegel, a leap out of the absolute idea. The becoming nature of the idea is a movement within the absolute idea itself, and in particular, a movement intimately connected to its essential self-knowing structure. In other words, the absolute idea, thanks to this self-knowing movement, can open itself up to those certainly not pure, but no less logical, or conceptual realms that are realms of nature and spirit.

The absolute idea is absolute precisely because it also knows how to grasp the limit of the logical form within which it has been determined (so, we perhaps can understand the meaning of *noch logisch* – still logical – with which Hegel connotes the absolute idea in its logical form): the logical idea is aware of the delimitation of its purely logical configuration where it is at first confined (*in den reinen Gedanken eingeschloßen*, as Hegel says) and precisely this knowledge constitutes the true condition for the transition to another sphere and science. The latter, though, in turn is not non-logical or non-conceptual. It is no more the purely logical sphere but constitutes a place where the logical is confronted with the constraints and concrete structures of reality. As a consequence, the development of thought beyond logic does not take place within a realm higher than the logical as if it were over it and would leave the latter behind. If this were the case, philosophy would be terminated – as Schelling sees consistently in many respects – with the *Science of Logic*. The Hegelian challenge seems rather to rest on the possibility to consider the domain beyond the logic neither as excluding the *Science of Logic* nor as the ultimate ceasing of the logical thinking. For Hegel, the place where the sphere of the purely logical comes to completion is the beginning of another sphere, not because thought now applies to something other than itself but because in it dialectical thinking is no longer considered in its purely logical determinacy, and is grasped in relation to further conditions and constraints.

This kind of transition – from the idea in its logical purity to the idea as nature, and consequently from the *Science of Logic*, i.e. from the science of the idea *as* logic (*Science of Logic*) to the science of the idea *as* nature–cannot be understood according to the transitions that were at stake in the logic. The transition from logic to nature does not take place according to a logical need to be fulfilled within the logical domain itself. It can only happen trough a decision: the idea decides to dismisst (*sich entlassen*), freely, the moment of its own particularity, the immediate idea as its reflection, itself as nature, i.e. the decision to free itself from its pure reflection in the transparency of thought and to meet itself in the form of its particularity.

Understanding this transition as an action of freedom realized in the decision obviously does not mean intending to view it subjectivistically, like a voluntarist, arbitrary choice without any inner necessity. Certainly, the necessity that is proper of a movement in which the idea is involved in its absoluteness does not originate in an external compulsion or deficiency that the idea would experience, and which would drive the latter elsewhere. The necessity inherent in the decision of the absolute idea is not comparable with

that which explains all internal transitions of logic, as it originates only in its freedom. However, this does not mean that this transition is not logical, unjustified or ungrounded. The domains that are disclosed in the very decision of the idea, albeit not pure in the intra-logical sense, are actually forms of the idea. For this reason, they are involved in all respects in that process of philosophical justification and critical sublation of external constraints which ultimately makes the system the proper exposition of the science of freedom.

4.7 Conclusions

In this sense, the concept of freedom is one that can lead to an adequate understanding of the meaning of absoluteness that, according to Hegel, belongs to the absolute idea. Freedom comes to the fore in the idea not just as one of its properties alongside the others but at the actual and full meaning of it. The absoluteness of the idea, in fact, in its own structure, is certainly not a quiet and static acquiescence of the idea itself. Inasmuch as it is the absolute truth, precisely because of its absoluteness, it is the coming out of itself, which is not the passing into another, as with its opposite, but is the becoming other which at the same time accomplishes the dissolution of the otherness simply understood as something merely presupposed or opposed. In becoming other than itself the absolute idea recognizes this otherness at once as a result of its own action and as something through which the idea itself is constituted: something in which it comes to know itself.

Precisely in being absolute and realized in itself, the idea is already transcending and alienating itself. Since the idea is absolute freedom, to be fully itself it cannotbut get rid of its own freedom. In this respect the Hegelian and the Schellinghian proposals arrive at a point of significant proximity which, however, at the same time reveals a maximum distance. Absoluteness and fulfilment are not only properties that the idea possesses, but also ways of being and doing through which it deals with its knowledge. Inasmuch as the idea's absoluteness resides essentially in its self-knowledge, the only way it has to effectively gain this knowledge is by becoming other to itself and by experiencing in this very act its truth in relation with reality.

Only in this sense does the philosophy of nature and the philosophy of the spirit represent the process of realization of this idea: Not in so far as the latter were lacking something and were in need to be accomplished in a form external to it but in so far as in nature and spirit the idea knows the configurations in which, starting from its absoluteness, it unfolds and articulates itself.

For this reason, it is clear that according to Hegel the conquest of absoluteness never means to simply attain a goal where one can hold one's ground. It rather rests on nothing but the very process of 'absolutizing'..' As an

absolute, the idea is absolutely free precisely in the act in which it frees itself, i.e. in that act in which, to truly be itself – and, therefore, to know itself in its objectivity – it renounces itself as a pure logical form not to apply itself to something other than itself, but rather to recognize itself in what appears as the other with respect to itself.

5 Hegel's System and the Negativity of Dialectics

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Translated by S. Stein and J. Wretzel

5.1 Hegel and Adorno on the Negativity of the Dialectic

With its title alone, the *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences* (Enz) already expresses Hegel's claim to complete and finish philosophy by putting it into a scientific system. The conception of philosophy as a system was not new to Hegel; he already had a series of polemically successive philosophical systems by his idealist predecessors before his eyes, and his was to become the last system that would abolish them all. It was to be the most comprehensive and complete the series.

In a certain sense it may indeed have been the last, but it may not have been a triumph but rather a revelation of the failure of systematic philosophy. In this sense, Adorno writes in *Negative Dialectics* (ND) that the system as such, and not just Hegel's, was 'a nonsensically-rationally generated order': It was '[s]omething posited that presents itself as something that is in-itself' (ND 32). Adorno even suggests it has its origin in animal life: 'Predators are hungry; the leap onto the victim is difficult'; the 'anger towards the victim' helps with the leap, which must be rationalized, reasons must be found: 'The living being to be eaten must be evil' (ND 33). This applies even to epistemology: the non-I, everything that reminds us of nature, is regarded as inferior; the unity of thought may devour it. 'The system is the belly that has become spirit, anger is the signature of every idealism'; the moral law turns out to be rationalized anger towards the object that is not identical with thinking. 'Nietzsche's liberating feature [...] was that he spoke out such mysteries' (ND 34).

So much for Adorno, whose book title '*Negative Dialectics*' is a pleonasm turned against Hegel, which admittedly only becomes a pleonasm in the Hegelian context and this makes its use by Adorno seem puzzling at first. How could Hegel of all people have overlooked the negativity of the dialectic? On the contrary, he makes a point of it. The logical, Hegel writes at the much-quoted beginning of the 'Preliminary Conception' (*Vorbegriff*) of the *Encyclopedia Logic*, has three sides, and the dialectic is the negative one among them. In detail – I will mention this for the sake of abundance or surfeit – Hegel distinguishes firstly an abstract or reasonable side, secondly a

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dialectical or negative-reasonable side and thirdly a speculative or positive-reasonable side (Enz § 79). Consequently, dialectic and negativity belong together for him as one and the same side of the logical. How can Adorno then want to turn the program of negative dialectics against Hegel?

Further ahead in the preliminary concept, Hegel had explained in a push to better Kant's transcendental dialectic that the antinomy that Kant had diagnosed in four cosmological objects was 'much more to be found in all objects of all genres, in all conceptions, concepts and ideas,' and Hegel added in anticipation (Enz § 48 remark):

> To know this and to gain knowledge of objects thus characterised belongs to the essence of a philosophical consideration. This characteristic constitutes what determines itself further on as the dialectical moment of the logical.[1]

The dialectic is thus not only the negative, but more pointedly the antinomic side of thinking, and the antinomic is the negative pure and simple and not only as a subsequent truth operation on a given affirmative content, but either simply as the pure, abstract nothing or, if as an operation, then only as one on itself. Correspondingly, Hegel had anticipated the dialectical moment even earlier in the beginning of the *Encyclopedia*, namely in its introduction (Enz § 11 remark), as follows:

> The realization that the dialectic makes up the very nature of thinking and that as understanding it is bound to land in the negative of itself, i.e. in contradiction, constitutes a cardinal aspect of logic.

The nature of thought is its dialectic, which, to be more precise, consists in the fact that it inevitably comes into the negative, and here not into the negative of a given positive, but into the negative of itself, into pure, reflective or circular negativity. The nature and source of thought would thus not be, as one might think with large parts of contemporary philosophy and a biased reading of Aristotle, *kataphasis* as the statement of something about something, followed by *apophasis*, the denial of the content of a statement about something. Rather, before all predicative structuring, the primal act of thinking would be seen in the pure, absolute negation.

Hegel and Adorno agree about this. 'Thinking is […] negating,' it says in the introduction to *Negative Dialectics*; thinking is 'a protestation against the imposition of everything immediate' (ND 30).

This shows very clearly what separates Hegel and Adorno as dialecticians from Wittgenstein and Sellars as logical atomists and theorists of logical picturing. It is not meant to be an offence that Sellars is here once associated

1 This and other passages from the *Logic* follow the Brinkmann/Dahlstrom translation [trans.].

with logical atomism. Indeed, Sellars struggles to emancipate himself from it and from the myth of the given. But Sellars's opposition to the myth remains half-hearted; he criticizes it in epistemology and remains under its thumb in ontology. According to Sellars, there can be no epistemically immediate, but the ontically immediate is waiting to be logically represented by our descendants by means of an ideal – 'Peirceian' – conceptual structure.

But let us return to our main topic. Thinking in its form as understanding necessarily gets into the negative of the negative, but this is not taken as iteration, but as reflection, as a turning of the negative back against itself. So it is not about the double negation of an affirmative content, α, which would sublate itself according to the logical truth '$\alpha \leftrightarrow \sim\sim\alpha$,' but about the negation of itself, which cannot be expressed in a propositional logical way, and which can only be expressed with predicate logic by means of semantic ascent, i.e. by means of the truth predicate, namely in so-called Liar sentences: 'The sentence you are currently hearing or reading is not true.' This self-negation, this negative of itself, is the contradiction that Hegel means, the one with which thinking as understanding necessarily gets involved. We can see, independently of Hegel, why; for we understand the liar, ask about the sentence's value of truth and find ourselves in a hopeless contradiction from which we cannot free ourselves through repeated negation, because its negation is already the liar himself.

In the last quoted passage, Hegel, continuing directly, already points towards the main difficulty from which Adorno's general objection against him will flow, just as Jacobi's objection against Spinoza's philosophy and philosophy in general was flowing during Hegel's lifetime. Thought must be thrown into the negative of itself, into contradiction. Hegel says this and the liar illustrates this. The contradiction in question, however, is, as the liar also illustrates, hopeless; it is a veritable antinomy, hence it drives into despair. In this sense Hegel continues (ibid.):

> Despairing over its inability to achieve *by its own lights* the resolution of the contradiction into which it has placed itself, thinking returns to the resolutions and appeasements that have become part of the spirit in its other modes and forms.

We know from our days the well-intentioned resolutions and reassurances that Liar-sentences are meaningless for this or that reason, that they make no statements at all, that is, they are not even considered candidates for truth evaluations. Hegel, too, knew such reassurance, that is the classical and highly interpretable one that contradictions are unthinkable (cf. e.g. TW 6, 563), and he spurned them, but he did not fall into Jacobi's misology. Instead, he continues (ibid.):

> In the course of this return, however, thinking did not need to fall into the *misology* – a phenomenon Plato had already witnessed – of acting

> polemically against itself as happens when the so-called *immediate knowing* is declared to be the *exclusive* form in which we may become conscious of the truth.

Nor does Adorno fall into misology or into the myth of the given. He does not recur to supposedly immediate knowledge as the only form of knowledge. However, neither does he want to take the path into the closed system through which Hegel intends to domesticate antinomy. Adorno believes that it simply cannot be domesticated. According to his diagnosis, the logical lacks the speculative or positive-rational side; the dialectic remains negative in an emphatic sense, because the logical does not go beyond its positivistic side, the one of the understanding, and its liberating, negative-rational side, which is its dialectic side. By choosing his book title, Adorno implies that Hegel has a positive dialectic and accuses him secretly of a monumental misunderstanding of himself, namely of forgetting his own better insight that dialectic is – and remains – essentially negative.

Hegel had said that on its return from antinomy, thinking had no need to fall into misology and to behave polemically against itself. The 'and' was probably meant explicatively: to fall into misology, namely to behave polemically against oneself. Adorno understands the 'and' additively[2] and behaves in a selective manner: he rejects misology, but not a polemical self-relation of thought. Thinking, he says in *Negative Dialectics* (ND 144), 'is able to think against itself without revealing[3] itself,' and it must think against itself in order to penetrate its objects. 'Only concepts can achieve what the concept prevents. Knowledge is a *trôsas iase-tai*' (ND 62, towards the end of the introduction). *Ho trôsas iasetai*, who or what heals the wounded: the spear of Achilleus [with which he wounds] Telephos and the holy spear of the Grail King Amfortas. In the same way, the concept heals our epistemic relationship to things, which itself was destroyed by the concept, and there is no other way. 'Nothing leads out of the dialectical immanent context [to nature] but itself.' (ND 145) This is negative dialectics; the positive one, however, is defined like this: 'The act of violence of equalisation reproduces the contradiction that it eradicates' (ND 146).

5.2 The Logical Isosthenia of Being and Negativity

But let us leave this problem for the time being and turn back to Hegel to ask about the prospects of a closed philosophical system according to his precepts. Hegel's mature system, as it is presented in the preliminary conception of the *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*, begins with 'the decision to want to think purely,' by means of which, as Hegel says (§ 78),

2 That is, not as an explication but as something new and additional.

3 'Revealing' in the sense of 'abandoning.'

the demand of skepticism or 'the complete lack of presuppositions for everything [...] is accomplished by freedom.' By 'abstracting from everything,' freedom grasps 'its pure abstraction, the simplicity of thinking' (ibid.). This pure abstraction may be called being, if one wants to give it a label. With a mere act of baptism one cannot yet do much wrong. On the other hand, the simple label 'being' hides the negativity that is typical for the accomplished skepticism or for pure abstraction, which thus permeates and surrounds pure being and which therefore has to be supplemented by a second label. Science begins with being, in truth with being and negativity, and thus in short, it begins with being and nothingness.

It also begins in contradiction. Being and nothingness are not standing friendly, peacefully next to each other. On the one hand, they are identical, together they are just being, and on the other hand they are different, here is being and there is nothingness. It thus corresponds to the demand of the accomplished skepticism, whose main method is isosthenia, that is the equalization of contradictory statements. Under the conditions of the abstraction of everything, of course, it is not some substantial proposition and its negation that are spoken with equal force, such as 'snow is white' and 'snow is not white.' Instead, it is a purely logical, vacuous proposition and its equally logical and vacuous contradiction. What we need here is a pure and simple contradiction, without concrete sides that contradict each other.

In this sense, decades ago, Hans-Peter Falk had interpreted the first two operative theorems of the *Science of Logic*, and identified them as the statements 'Being is identical with Nothing' and 'Being is different from Nothing' and had interpreted them as two open sentences in which only logical signs occur. According to Falk's interpretation, the expressions 'being' and 'nothing' do not function as names or individual constants, but as variables; as the predicate serves the purely logical predicate of identity and as monadic truth function serves the negation by means of which isosthenia is expressed: 'x=y' and '~(x=y).'[4]

The free variables 'x' and 'y' or 'being' and 'nothingness' do not designate anything specific, but may be assigned to objects. In the present case, however, there is no possible assignment that would make the two open sentences true, especially since it would satisfy them both. We can only think of the contralogical limiting case of a structure which, *per impossibile*, would be a model of the two sentences; Hegel calls it becoming, which, due to its inconsistent transpossibility, immediately collapses and gives way to a more stable successor structure, *Dasein*.

4 See Hans-Peter Falk, *Das Wissen in Hegels "Wissenschaft der Logik"*, Freiburg/München 1983, p. 26. It should be understood that both sentences do not belong to the foreground logic, i.e. to pure thinking itself, but to the background logic, i.e. to external reflection on pure thinking.

The philosophical science, or more precisely the *Logic*, thus begins in abstract and total inconsistency. In this sparse, aseptic purity, fortunately, the '*ex contradictione quodlibet*' cannot cause any further damage, cannot trigger a logical explosion; for there are no further sentences available than the two opening ones 'x=y' and '~(x=y)' or 'Being is Nothing' and 'Being is not Nothing,' which have already been explicitly claimed anyway. Hidden implications are not to be feared in view of these limited possibilities of expression. That 2 is both a prime number and not a prime number, that snow is both white and not white, that grass is both green and not green, and so on, cannot yet be thought and said in the abstraction of pure thinking. Thus, the initial inconsistency does not lead into logical chaos, at least not into a chaos that would be greater than this inconsistency itself, taken for itself. In this respect, there is no need for a special paraconsistent logic with the task of making contradictions conceivable in a non-chaotic way. The logical situation as such is still paraconsistent, the logical space of pure Being and of Nothing is still so transparent that nothing worse threatens beyond the simple inconsistency.

Still, the simple inconsistency is certainly disturbing enough. Hegel, as makes sense, does not shake the principle of non-contradiction of classical logic, but instead uses it as the motor of logical development. For the interpretation of Hegel's philosophy, we therefore do not need a paraconsistent logic and certainly not a dialetheism. We can indeed think the contradiction, but not truthfully. By thinking a contradiction, we think nothing that is solidly true, identical, in agreement with itself and with thinking, nothing with which it could end. However, a contradiction may be correct in a certain sense, namely as adequately characterizing a certain logical transit station. This, however, is all the more unfortunate for the situation in question: it contradicts itself, is an unstable becoming (in the logic of being) or a vain illusion [*Schein*] (in the logic of essence) and mocks any description that could be recognized as true. Precisely because the contradiction must be avoided, because where it has occurred, it cannot remain with it, a logical development comes about and the evolution of logical space is set in motion. Thus, the logical initial contradiction of Being and Nothing in their identity and difference points beyond itself and leads to a subsequent state of logical space in which it no longer exists in this form.

Therein lies the great theoretical hope that can be tied to Hegel's philosophy: that the control of the strict initial inconsistency, its gradual reduction, will last long enough to produce rich logical structures, but can nevertheless be led to a good end and thus to a consistent, fixed point, be it at the end of the *Logic* or only at the end of the system. The fulfilment of that hope would be the triumph of positive dialectic. That dialectic is and remains negative is Adorno's main objection to Hegel. Negative dialectics would also generate logical structure, but would presumably get lost in the indefinite, namely in the bad infinity of ever new forms of inconsistency.

5.3 The Antinomy of Pure Thinking

Let us now take a step back to look at the situation of thinking in general. Independently of Hegel, this leads us to his insight that thinking as such is afflicted with an incurable contradiction, a veritable antinomy. The term 'afflicted' is an understatement; rather, thinking emerges from the antinomy as its root and remains committed to it. Thinking is contradictory, at least and especially in its logical basic position. Let us call this assertion 'the antinomy thesis.'

The standard view is, admittedly, a different one. It considers thinking in its pure, logical basic position to be free from contradictions. The principle of non-contradiction is regarded as an unchallenged triviality. And of course, at first glance, logic seems neither in need of nor capable of justification: not in need, because it, and not the planning horizon of political administration, is the gold standard of a lack of alternatives; not capable of justification because in its justification, one would already have to make use of it. Its justification, if one were necessary and possible, would be circular or reflexive, it would be a veritable self-justification.

And yet, logic can be shaken from within, on its own terms and by means of itself. This is the message of the antinomy thesis. Mike Stange proved years ago that Fichte had precisely this problem in mind and that his *Science of Knowledge* should also and especially serve the justification of logic. It would be a justification from within, of course, because if the logic is questioned from within and only from within, it must and can be secured from within. This was Fichte's and in another way Hegel's endeavor. Adorno, on the other hand, seems to believe that logic and pure thinking cannot be helped, but only that it serves to help our cognition of things. Logic is the poisoned tip of the spear, the use of which injures that which is to be known, so that it can only be healed by using logic again, when it comes up and we are wise. But logic itself remains stuck in the negative and antinomic.

The fact that it unsettles itself is proven firstly by the liar and related examples, such as the concept of a heterological predicate or a concept that does not instantiate itself, and secondly by a general *tu-quoque* argument. Mathematicians understand what non-well-founded sets are or would be, especially the singleton-of-itself (set of sets of itself). They (i.e. the mathematicians) understand, that is to say, the possibility of the formation of a unit set in idle mode, without a given element whose unit set is to be formed. But then we should – and *tu quoque* should – understand the possibility of negation in idle mode, without a given fact or state of affairs to negate. The negation of given facts is always a determined negation, the negation-of-itself, however, is an undetermined, self-determining, reflective or circular negation. We understand what is meant by it, it undoubtedly exists as a thought; all that remains is the question of its truth value. We would like to say that its truth value is 'false,' in accordance with the principle of non-contradiction. Since the denial of itself, for example in the form of the liar, directly contradicts itself, it must

be false. But it is precisely through this negative evaluation of truth that we confirm and rehabilitate it and join its own statement, which in turn leads us into the contradiction we wanted to avoid. The logical situation into which the negation of itself brings us is hopeless, namely hopelessly antinomic.

Thus we come to the conclusion with Hegel that thinking, at least in its pure basic position or default position in which it is still completely with itself and in which nothing specific is thought and negated, leads to contradiction. If we want to think without contradiction and want to recognize and change reality in a thinking manner, we must laboriously work our way out of the pure default position into zones with fewer contradictions. Hegel tries to achieve this already within the sphere of pure thinking, i.e. logic, but perhaps this can only be achieved by including extra-logical, illustrative and possibly empirical facts, i.e. in the *Realphilosophie*, or even in the individual sciences. If at all.

The process of this elaboration is the dialectic. It would be positive if it led to the reconciliation of the antagonistic sides of reflexive negation in a happy end. But none of the reconciliations 'claimed by absolute idealism [...], from the logical to the political-historical, were valid,' Adorno writes, calling his book *Negative Dialectics* (ND 19), not least because of this diagnosis. Is he right? To get closer to an answer, let us follow Hegel on some of the main stations of negativity in the logic and in the system.

5.4 The Malignant Circle of Negation as a Benign Ferris Wheel?

The first station is the pure nothing of the logical beginning. If the negative is the singular logical operation and mediation, then the pure nothing is its simple and abstract stage of fading and for the sake of this bareness, it is identical with the pure being, from which on the other hand, it is distinguished by mediation. Therein lies the inconsistency of the logical beginning, which forbids us to interpret being and nothing as abstract objects. As objects they would be impossibilia. They only become tangible as dependent moments of the fleeting becoming, which in its self-contradiction immediately sinks into the logical *quale* of Dasein. Dasein is a determinate negation, namely that of becoming, but on its ground, the determinate negation that it is, continues to develop into the reflexive negation of the other of itself. This is the basic shape of the self-denial in the Logic of Being: the reflexive negation contaminated with immediate Dasein or Dasein that is directed adversely against itself.

As determined negation, it operates on a given fact 'p' and as a result produces the counterfact '~p.' The negation-of-itself, in contrast, can be imagined as an infinite sequence of negation signs without an initial 'p':

Denial-of-itself: ~~~…

If you combine two negation signs in the sequence to pairs, because of the equivalence of double negation and affirmation, it turns into the affirmation-of-itself:

Affirmation-of-itself: ~~(~~(~~(…)))

Hegel takes this into account when he says that the other of itself is as the other of the other precisely the something-identical-to-itself. On the level of everyday language, this theoretical move corresponds to the effective, but very indirect negation of the liar, which would be the truth-teller: 'The sentence you are currently hearing or reading is true.'

But this result is one-sided. Because an infinite number of negation signs is not an even (or odd) number of signs, they cannot be combined in pairs without remainder. To compensate for the one-sidedness, a double result must be assumed: in addition to the something identical with itself, there is also its other, according to the alternative combination of the negation signs, in which one of them stops before the first bracket:

Negation of the affirmation-of-itself: ~(~~(~~(~~(…)))

On the logical level of Dasein or quality, this state of affairs is the Other of the Something that is different from the Something that is identical with itself. Two opposing one-sidednesses, the Something and its Other, may be better than one, but they remain a makeshift. The Other of itself rumbles further in its antinomy as a constant coming out of itself and becoming different and drives the Something identical with itself and its Other before it until they collapse into one again in the form of the finite. The suppressed inconsistency moves back into the centre. Here we observe a threefold pattern in the dissolution of the antinomy of negation: firstly, into an affirmative one-sidedness that is identical with itself, secondly into a negative one-sidedness that is different from it. Thirdly, however, the antinomy remains virulent in the background against these one-sidednesses and brings them together again in inconsistency as it progresses. In the case of the logic of Dasein, this inconsistency is that of the finite.

The pattern is repeated, minus the contamination with immediate Dasein, in the logic of reflection. We there find the denial-of-itself as a void, a semblance that is free of being. Its dissolution now no longer leads, firstly, to a something that is identical with itself; it leads to the identity as such, secondly to the difference as such that is distinguished from it, and thirdly, from there, to its inconsistent fusion. This is no longer the self-contradictory finite, but the contradiction as such, purely for itself. The logic of reflection generates determinations of reflection: instead of an existent that is identical with itself, identity; instead of an existent that is different from it, the difference; and instead of something that has Dasein (i.e. the finite), contradiction (as such).

The immediate that is supposed to be affirmative has disappeared and can no longer color the negation-of-itself as being there. It is no longer the other of itself, but now it is the pure, absolute difference. But there is still a remnant of simple immediacy in play in the form of the immediacy of the

negation as the logical mediating operation itself. We do not yet understand it by itself, but ultimately, through all due changes and adjustments, from propositional logic as one of four one-place truth operations, and the only non-trivial one among them. What the negation actually is, however, does not follow from this at the beginning of the logic of essence, but must be invested by us out of our propositional-logical pre-understanding.

At the end of the logic of essence, however, and in the transition to the concept, this preliminary understanding should be caught up with, every residue of immediacy should be dissolved and every investment should be proven to be a theoretical profit. The negation is now defined by the course of logical development, it is defined as the one and only operation that has itself as its basis and result, or, more simply, as that which mediates between itself and itself. Its being is identical with its mediation with itself, in Hegel's words: 'its being in and for itself is identical with its being posited' (TW 6, 273). Thus it is the concept. But it remains Hegel's secret how its negating, destructive, even self-destructive power is now to be tamed. The fact that it is in any case not completely so is part of its negative nature and is immediately apparent in its power to break up the concept. For the concept breaks up or splits into the two sides of the judgment. The old threefold structure still reigns in the immediate measures to remedy the antinomy. In the concept, universality takes the place of the something and of identity, particularity takes the place of the other and of difference, and in the place of finite and the infinite to which it raises itself, and in the place of contradiction and of the ground to which it goes, steps the double-edged singularity that is 'return into itself' and 'the concept's loss of itself' at once (TW 6, 299).

Admittedly, Hegel is well aware of all this, and for reassurance he states: 'The concept is first of all formal, the concept in the beginning or that which is immediate (TW 6, 272). From the beginning of the *Logic of the Concept* one should not yet expect the logical reconciliation. The concept in the beginning is reconciliation only *in nuce* and still undeveloped. It is developed and realized as logical reconciliation only in the absolute idea – or it should be, if, to borrow Adorno's wording again, the logical reconciliation 'which the absolute idealism [...] claimed [...] were valid' (ND 19). But how could it be? The burden of proof lies with Hegel, and it is not easy to see how he could shoulder it in the *Logic* or in the system. But let us make an attempt into this direction soon.

Let us first take a brief look at the logical end of the line, that is the absolute idea. Everything else, says Hegel, is 'error, cloudiness, opinion, striving, arbitrariness and transitoriness; the absolute idea alone is Being, imperishable life, self-knowing truth, and is all truth' (TW 6, 549). And yet, thought does not stop with it. Admittedly, it does not pass with blind necessity into a successor state of logical space. But thought decides 'to freely release from itself the moment of its particularity or of [...] otherness, the immediate idea as its reflection, itself as nature' (Enz § 244). Logical space thus freely releases the natural space as its immediate reflection. But in contrast to the

theological tradition which thought that God created the world, namely as his free, in no sense necessary, act of love, the freedom of the idea – according to Hegel's logical concept of freedom – is only the successor of necessity which has become completely transparent. According to the theological tradition God is sufficient for himself in complete freedom from contradiction. He did not have to create the world. The absolute idea, on the other hand, should admittedly be 'all truth,' but despite this incantation the freedom of its decision to release itself as nature remains a logical necessity, even if it has become transparent. The antinomy reaches beyond the end of logic and continues to rumble, despite its being now transparent and grasped, and thus the idea makes possible, in a welcome way, the *Realphilosophie*, in whose respective immediacy forms of opacity and blind necessity will appear again.

And at the end of real philosophy? Why should the system there return into its calm fixed point, why confirm, create and enjoy there 'the eternal in and for itself existing idea as absolute spirit' (Enz § 577)? I know no better answer to this question than the quite abstract one, that the narrow circle of the negation-of-itself has meanwhile widened to a spacious hamster wheel and even to a wheel of wheels. Hegel's comparison at the beginning of his preface at *Phenomenology of Mind* corresponds to this:

> The bud disappears when the blossom bursts forth, and one could say that the bud is refuted by the blossom; similarly, when the fruit appears, the blossom is declared to be a false Being-there of the plant, and the fruit replaces the blossom as the truth of the plant. These forms are not only different, they also supplant one another as mutually incompatible. Yet, at the same time their fluid nature makes them moments of the organic unity, in which they not only do not conflict, but each is as necessary as the other; and this shared necessity alone constitutes the life of the whole.
>
> (Hegel 2018: 5, 6)[5]

The whole of such a streaming, as it is revived every spring with new buds, is the true that is identical with itself and that can stay with itself. The final resolution of the antinomy of negation would thus lie in the fact that its circle widens to a Ferris wheel and gains stations within itself that grant temporary residence, both to thinking and to life in general.

Adorno did not want to settle for that. The eternity of the absolute spirit, which maintains itself in the cycle of births and deaths of individuals at their expense, was not enough reconciliation for him. Reconciliation must include the living body. But even a liberated society in the sense of dialectical

5 Hegel, G. W. F. (2018), *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, Michael Inwood transl., intro, comm., Oxford: Oxford University Press.

materialism would hardly have sufficed for him. Reconciliation must not stop at the individuals as physical individuals. The longing of materialism, he writes correspondingly (ND 207), 'would be the resurrection of the flesh; this is quite alien to idealism, that is to the realm of the absolute spirit.' Who would want to contradict this?

6 The *Encyclopedia* System as a Form of Worship

Roberto Vinco

6.1 Some Introductory Remarks

At the very beginning of his *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, Hegel presents the thesis that philosophy and religion share the same reference-object, namely God, understood as the ultimate Truth.

In Hegel's words:

> It is true that philosophy initially shares its object with religion. Both have the *truth* for their object, and more precisely the truth in the highest sense, in the sense that *God* and God *alone* is the truth.
>
> (Hegel 2015: §1, 28)

This point of commonality, however, constitutes only one aspect of the relationship between philosophy and religion. For this shared content is articulated in different ways: on the one hand, we have the object in the religious form of representation, and, on the other, in the philosophical form of conceptual thinking. In a word, we have an identity of content and a formal difference.

In the present article, I shall present a point of view which endeavors to clarify the meaning of this commonality and difference between philosophy and religion. Before I turn to depict it, however, I will briefly offer some alternative explanations for this aspect of Hegel's thought and shed light on the conceptual problems they give rise to, thus enabling us to understand more clearly the position I intend to develop.

A preliminary interpretation of this Hegelian view might be the following: the religious content remains constant, but is merely presented by philosophy in a 'secular' fashion. This differentiation is, however, problematic in the context of the Hegelian framework, for content and form are to be understood from the dialectical point of view as essentially interwoven and therefore inseparable.

Hegel himself summarizes this idea in the following way:

> But in speculative logic it is demonstrated that, in truth, the content is not merely a being-within-itself, but something which spontaneously

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> enters into relation with an Other; just as, conversely, in truth, the form must be grasped not merely as something dependent, external to the content, but rather as that which makes the content into the content, into a being-within-itself, into something distinct from an Other. The genuine content contains, therefore, form within itself and the genuine form is its own content.
>
> (Hegel 2017: §383 Zu., 17–8)

This means that form and content have are to be taken as elements, which are fundamentally interrelated. If this is the case, this would appear to imply, that the 'philosophical God' and the 'religious one' are not connected, inasmuch as the religious form is separate from the philosophical one. The term 'God' would thereby have, to use a scholastic jargon, an equivocal meaning. This consequence, however, also poses a problem, since it breaks the content-related continuity between religion and philosophy, which lies at the core of the Hegelian approach.

A possible reaction to this impasse might therefore be formulated as follows: philosophy reflects on the content mediated through religion, which in turn serves as a point of departure for philosophy. At the same time, philosophy transforms this religious content into conceptual thoughts. Even this solution, however, is problematic, for it implies a modularization[1] of the diverse branches of culture, which remains irreconcilable with the holistic character of Hegelian philosophy.

An alternative explanation, and in my view a more effective one, can be formulated in the following manner: philosophy has not only the same content, but incorporates also in a transfigured manner *the religious form itself*. In this way, philosophy obtains its all-embracing character, which is a fundamental characteristic of the Hegelian view.

Now, the form is to be regarded as the result or the static aspect of the mode through which a spiritual activity relates to its object. Thus, the inclusion of the form implies at the same time the integration of the manner through which a particular knowledge domain is approached and articulated.

This approach is also observable in further contexts of Hegelian philosophy. If we take, for example, Hegel's systematization of the various powers of the human mind, we can make the following observation: the content of the lower powers (for example, intuition) is not simply absorbed and restructured by the highest power, but the *activity* of the lower power – in this case of the *act* of intuition – rather is integrated into the activity of the highest power (knowing). In a word, the act of intuition (*Anschauen*) has

1 By 'modularization' I mean the conception according to which the information processing performed by the mind is composed of different modules which are *independent* from each other.

to become *cognitive* intuition (*erkennendes Anschauen*) (Hegel 2017: § 445 Re., 174).[2]

Now, the cultus is an essential aspect of religion's approach to and articulation of its central object, i.e. God. This means that philosophy, since it also integrates the approach of the lower spiritual forms to absolute reality, has additionally a *cultic* dimension. Put in more concrete terms: philosophy is knowing *cultus*, since religious activity is integrated therein, and philosophy is *knowing* cultus, because this religious activity is transfigured and elevated to the level of thinking.

According to Hegel, philosophy explicates itself completely in the form of a system and this system finds its expression in the *Encyclopedia*. This ultimately means – and this is the central thesis of this contribution – that the system itself has a cultic character. Interestingly enough, this position is found, at least implicitly, in a famous passage of Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*:

> God is the one and only object of Philosophy. Its concern is to occupy itself with God, to apprehend everything in Him, to lead everything back to him, as well as to derive everything particular from God and to justify everything only insofar as it stems from God, is sustained through its relationship with Him, lives by his radiance and has [within] itself the mind of God. Thus philosophy *is* theology, and [one's] occupation with philosophy – or rather *in* Philosophy – is of itself divine service.
>
> (Hegel 2007: 84)[3]

An important aspect of the quoted passage should be emphasized. Philosophy is a form of cultus, a divine service, because it is capable of linking the divine principle with *everything else*. In more philosophical terms: the fundamental principle of reality (*das Absolute*) is to be conceived of as sustaining and permeating the whole of reality. However, this is again the fundamental character of the philosophical system.[4] The cultic and philosophic-systematic dimensions are therefore essentially interwoven.

In what follows, I will substantiate this relation between encyclopedical (i.e. systematic) philosophy and the cultus. Now, since the *Encyclopedia* can be understood as an explication of the Idea (*die Idee*), this will also be

2 For an interesting analysis of this aspect of Hegel's philosophy of mind, see for example Halbig (2002).

3 Translations are listed in the bibliography. I have slightly modified this translation at the end and chosen to translate the word *Gottesdienst* as 'divine service,' and not in the more deflationary way as 'service of God,' because the central idea of this contribution is precisely the fact that philosophy is indeed a form of cultus. For an interpretation of this passage along similar lines, see for example Desmond (1992), chapter 2.

4 This is an idea that Hegel emphasized almost from the beginning of his philosophical career.

the thematic focus of my contribution. More concretely, I will analyze the sense in which the encyclopedical explication of the Idea can be regarded as a form of philosophical worship.

The thesis of the present paper will unfold in three steps: in the first part, I consider the Idea *a parte objecti* as an 'object' worthy of worship. In the second section, I consider the philosophical approach to the idea (the idea *a parte subjecti*) and in which sense it is comparable with the cultic activity. Finally, I examine the manner in which the *Idea in and for itself*, i.e. the absolute Idea (and also absolute Spirit) may be regarded as the complete expression of worship.

6.2 The *Idea as an 'Object Worthy of Worship'*

Cultus is primarily an activity, but one with a proper 'object,' a proper point of reference. This is the object *worthy of worship*.[5] One may pose the question what the features of such an object are and what determines its worthiness. We can point to two main features:

a) *Transcendence*: If worship is correctly exercised, it refers to that which is absolute and completely different from common reality. Why is this the case? Let us consider this from a negative perspective. Every extraordinary but finite reality can be an object of admiration (as in the case, for example, of an extraordinary athlete) and sometimes even of veneration (as in the case of a saint), but not of worship or adoration in the proper sense of the term. This is specifically reserved only for the transcendent God.[6] The confusion of these two levels would imply, to use a religious expression, a form of idolatry.[7]
b) *Immanence*: This transcendent dimension is, however, only one side of the coin. Cultus is an action performed by non-divine agents, but this implies that the worshipers can interact with the divine principle.[8] This, again, points to the fact that the act of worship presupposes an object to which it is possible to relate and that it is not 'closed in itself.' This, however, ultimately means that the object of worship is not just transcendent, it is epistemically accessible and immanent.[9] Put in negative

5 For this kind of description, cf. for example Swinburne (2016), particularly chapter 15.
6 In the Catholic and Orthodox tradition, for example, there is a fundamental distinction between *latria* (adoration) which is reserved only for the tri-one God, and *dulia* (veneration) for the extraordinary creatures (saints). Even the Holy Virgin Mary is an object hyper*dulia* (super-*veneration*) and not of adoration.
7 For a philosophical interpretation of the concept of idolatry, cfr. Feser (2015).
8 This is particularly evident if we consider, for example, the phenomenon of prayer.
9 The dimension of immanence and of all-inclusiveness has been famously defended by Charles Hartshorne (1971), 105. With reference to the 'worshipful One,' he writes: 'Not static, unchanging completeness, but all-inclusiveness, is what is required.'

> terms, pure and absolute transcendence excludes the activity of worship, for it undermines the relational dimension that is necessary for this action.

At this point, it is interesting to call attention to the fact that Hegel himself emphasizes this double dimension of worship. In his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, for example, we read:

> We have begun with the solid soil of religion, with this substantiality. Implied in it is [the awareness] that God alone is truth, or in a more developed form that God is gracious, has created human beings, etc. The presupposition is that God alone is true actuality, that insofar as I have actuality I have it only in God; since God alone is actuality, I should have my truth and actuality in God. That is the foundation of the cultus.
>
> (Hegel 2007: 444)

In a word, the foundation of the cultus is the fact that God, on the one hand, is the only absolute and self-sufficient reality, but that He is, on the other, also omnipresent and therefore immanent.

Now, the question that presents itself is in what sense this phenomenon is related to philosophy in general and to the Hegelian one in particular. Put in more precise terms, if philosophy is essentially connected to religion, is it possible to say that its object (the Absolute) maintains the features (transcendence and immanence) which are typical of the reality worthy of worship? To better account for this question, I will introduce it in an historical manner.

The beginning of philosophy has often been interpreted as a passage from mythos to logos.[10] Now, this passage has a consequence from a religious point of view, which is negative and at the same time positive.

It is negative because philosophy levels a critique against the mythological conception of the divine. More concretely, the mythological conception of God appears, from a philosophical point of view, as an anthropomorphic projection, which is, in itself, devoid of meaning and incoherent. A prime example embodying this negative attitude is the pre-Socratic Xenophanes. The ancient Greek philosopher explicates clearly that the divine figures developed by classical Greek mythology have specific human qualities and are thereby ultimately a product of subjective fantasy, which hypostasizes and glorifies several anthropological features. As opposed to this, the philosophical God is conceptualized as something that surpasses the human-related world, and this implies, once again, that the object of philosophy is transcendent.

10 The classical work on this theme is the one by Nestle (1975).

At the same time, this fundamental critique does not lead to a rejection of the divine *per se*. It does not aim at showing, in a quasi-Feuerbachian way, that every kind of divine conception is deceptive. On the contrary, the philosophical critique of Xenophanes aims to show that a 'philosophical God' is rather a purification and not a negation of the genuine religious perspective.[11]

We can express this process also in the following terms: the ultimate principle (*archē*) developed by the pre-Socratic philosophers is, on the one hand, a form of 'secularization' of the mythological principle, but, at the same time, it preserves its theological character. A sign of this theological continuity is the fact that the later tradition tends to regard the philosophical *archai* as divine principles.[12] We can therefore say that the rise of philosophical thinking goes hand in hand with the position of the real object of worship.

Turning to the Hegelian perspective, I maintain that Hegel assumes and develops this very approach. In describing the beginning of philosophy, expressed through the proposition of Thales ('water is the Absolute') he writes:

> The proposition of Thales, that water is the Absolute, or as the ancients say, the principle, is the beginning of Philosophy, because with it the consciousness is arrived at that essence, truth, that which is alone in and for itself, are one. A departure from what is in our sensuous perception here takes place; man recedes from this immediate existence. We must be able to forget that we are accustomed to a rich concrete world of thought; with us the very child learns, 'There is one God in Heaven, invisible.' Such determinations are not yet present here; the world of thought must be formed and there is as yet no pure unity. Man has nature before him as water, air, stars, the arch of the heavens; and the horizon of his ideas is limited to this. The imagination has, indeed, its gods, but its content still is natural; the Greeks had considered sun, mountains, earth, sea, rivers, &c., as independent powers, revered them as gods, and elevated them by the imagination to activity, movement, consciousness and will. What there is besides, like the conceptions of Homer, for instance, is something in which thought could not find satisfaction; it produces mere images of the imagination, endlessly endowed with animation and form, but destitute of simple unity […] This wild, endlessly varied imagination of Homer is set at rest by the proposition that existence is water; this conflict of an endless quantity of principles, all these ideas that a particular object is an independent truth, a self-sufficient power over others existing in its own right, are taken away, and it is shown likewise that there is only one universal, the universal

11 For an interpretation of this aspect of Xenophanes' thinking, see Halfwassen (2008).
12 Aristotle characterizes, for example, Anaximander's *apeiron* as something divine.

> self-existent, the simple unimaginative perception, the thought that is one and one alone.
>
> (Hegel 1995: 178–9)

These passages suggest that the advent of the philosophical perspective is associated with a separation and a break from the mythological worldview, in which divinities have a finite, particular and sensuous character. This break does not imply, however, a refusal of the divine as such or of the religious perspective in general. On the contrary, the God of reason, which transcends the boundaries of the physical world and is simultaneously accessible to thought, is close to the God of the monotheistic religions.

In this sense, it is possible to understand the Parmenidean position as a more radical and coherent position along these same lines. In other words, the idea of the Absolute as pure being developed by Parmenides implies, on the one hand, the real transcendence of the divine, for the source of the separateness of the Absolute is located in its ontological purity. At the same time, this absoluteness implies a real epistemic accessibility, for being (and not, for example, water) is the *proper* object of the intellect.[13] Hence, being is the *archē* which is completely liberated from its sensuous and mythological expression and therefore transcendent. At the same time, by virtue of its epistemic accessibility it has also a dimension of immanence. In a word: being is a more coherent expression for that which is worthy of worship.

Now, the Parmenidean being is the primary expression of the Hegelian Idea, it is the first so-called 'predicate' of the absolute, and therefore it also serves as the starting point of the *Encyclopedia* system. We can therefore move to the central object of the *Encyclopedia*.

Before we consider the Idea as such (sections §§213–44), some introductory remarks are in order: Hegel neither conceives of his Idea in Cartesian nor in Lockean terms, but in continuity with the Platonic mindset. This means that the Hegelian Idea is not a mental representation, but it is the real being (being in itself) which is also actually epistemically accessible. Furthermore, according to Hegel – and this time against a broadly Platonic approach – the Idea is not just an 'ideal.' It does not constitute an object separate from the phenomenal world, but an entity that sustains and permeates it. It is therefore, once again, transcendent *and immanent*. For this reason, one would be right in claiming that the Idea, expressed in the form of the Parmenidean being, is still not fully developed. To use a Hegelian expression, it is the Idea only in itself (*an sich*), for it is a conception which excludes the phenomenal word. The immanent aspect of the Hegelian Idea is not yet fully expressed.

13 Hegel thus also interprets the Parmenidean being as the real purified beginning of Philosophy. See Hegel (2015), § 86 Ad., 138.

This means finally that the Parmenidean being is a self-sufficient reality and therefore, in virtue of its transcendence, worthy of worship. It remains, however, a reality to which religious consciousness cannot relate and therefore does not meet the necessary criteria attached with this worthiness of worship.[14]

Turning now to the concluding part of Hegel's *Science of Logic* (chapter 'The Idea'), we can observe, in stark contrast to Hegel's depiction of the Parmenidean being, the fully disclosed Idea; this is a depiction of the Idea which also includes its immanent dimension.

It is initially important to notice that the Idea is defined as the truth in and for itself, i.e. as the absolute unity of concept and objectivity (Hegel 2015: § 213, 282–3). This aspect is quite relevant for our theme at hand, inasmuch as the truth-phenomenon of the Idea entails the aforementioned twofold nature. On the one hand, truth implies a realistic dimension ('true' is what is the case independently of whether I think it is the case) and at the same time a cognitive element, according to which reality is comprehensible in itself.[15]

However, the central point lies in the fact that the Idea as such manifests itself through the category of *Life*. How is this to be understood? The reference to the phenomenon of life does not imply an invalid insertion of biological concepts into the field of logic. It primarily refers to the fact that the Idea is not to be conceived of as an abstract unity, but a concrete one. This means that the Idea is systematic and all-encompassing; it is a spiritual principle that permeates and sustains every finite reality. In other words, the Idea, epitomized through life, also implies radical immanence.

This ultimately means that the more the Idea manifests its essence, the more it reveals itself as a principle which is simultaneously transcendent and immanent. This, in turn, would suggest that the Idea is the philosophical representation of that which is worthy of worship.

6.3 Cultic Aspect of the Philosophical Activity

Let us dwell on the aforementioned philosophical expression of the Idea in its relation to the cultus.

Worship (the *cultus*), in itself, is an act. But what kind of act is it? One might say, in accordance with the original meaning of the word 'worship,' that it is primarily a homage paid to a divine entity. At the same time, a

14 In still other terms, the Parmenidean God is the God of the philosophers that excludes the God of religion (the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob).

15 This double dimension is traditionally exposed in the medieval theory of the transcendentals. According to this theory truth and being have the same reference (*ens et verum convertuntur*). Truth has, however, a different meaning for it expresses something which is only implicit in being, and that is, once again, its knowability.

fundamental component of the worshiping act consists in the fact that this homage intends to bring about positive effects. In other words, the worship of God is also connected to the promotion and healing of human life. The worshiper aims, namely, at obtaining graces and benedictions. Additionally, the cultus has an apotropaic function. There is therefore a double dimension of worship: on the one hand, we have a fundamental focus on the divine origin, on the other, there is also a human component.[16] Thus, the cultus can be understood as an activity linking the divine principle and the finite subject, as a single theo-anthropo-logical act.

At this point, it might be useful to distinguish between an interior worship, expressed through internal adoration, and an exterior one, expressed through words and different actions, gestures and signs.

The exterior worship can in turn be private or public. In the former case, it is an intimate action either observed by no one or by very few people. In the latter case, the worshiping act is a more organized one and is voiced by an assembled community or a religious society.

Again, we encounter the question, in which sense this worshiping activity is philosophically relevant. In other words, if philosophy has a religious dimension broadly speaking, in what sense is religious praxis relevant for philosophy? I will approach this question once again from an historical perspective.

There is a line of philosophical thought which not only argues for the irrelevance of *organized* religious praxis, but proceeds to even emphasize its dangerous components. Spinoza can be adduced as an example of this mindset. In his *Theological-political Treatise*, he notes that external rites are not necessary for blessedness. They might have political significance, since they can aid the state in maintaining stability, but they do not possess a genuine intrinsic value and they also pose a risk in propagating a hypocritical *modus Vivendi* (cf. Spinoza 2016, particularly chapter 5). At the same time, one of the chief goals of Spinoza's treatise is the defense of a positive dimension of liberty, which grants the individual the possibility of *worshipping* God inwardly.

We might reframe this position for our purpose in the following way: the type of religion which is closer to philosophy is the one that reduces external praxis to a minimum and concentrates on the interior life. In other words, it is the inner worship of God which, if at all, has a philosophical character and relevance, for in the inner worship the content of religious belief manifests itself, at least partially, as philosophical.

The Hegelian position is fundamentally different and, in a way, almost maintains the opposite. First of all, it has to be emphasized that Hegel in his description of the concept of religion differentiates between the concept of God, the knowing of God and the cultus. The two latter elements describe

16 For an introduction to this theme, see Lanczkowski (1986), 1.

two different kinds of approaches to God. The first is a theoretical one, the second, a practical one.

This means that, according to the German philosopher, the cultic aspect is an essential and constitutive dimension of *true* religion, and is by no means dispensable. It is interesting to note in this regard that Hegel rebukes the modern tendency, which is particularly evident in Protestantism, to reduce or even eliminate the cultic character, and to focus only on the conceptual tenets of faith. Why is this the case? Real religion is, according to Hegel, the merging of the divine content with the human subject. Expressed in other terms, in religion Spirit manifests itself as something which is *for Spirit*. In order to gain this subjective dimension, theory is, however, not enough, because in the theoretical approach the subject immerses himself completely into his object of cognition. The practical element emphasizes, however, the subjective dimension and its independence:

> Only here, in the will or in the practical domain, do I exist on my own account, am I free and related to myself as subject, only now do I stand over against the object.
>
> (Hegel 2007: 442)

To neglect the cultic aspect is therefore a twofold error, because, on the one hand even the most intimate form of *religion* (being for Spirit) implies a subjective dimension, and this is connected with the realm of praxis. If, on the other hand, we really exclude every kind of practical dimension, there is no place for religion at all.

We said, however, that the cultus should be conceived of as producing a unity between the divine content and the subject. What does this imply? This practical dynamic is first of all an action that affects the subject that performs it, for in the cultus the subject has to subjugate himself to a set of norms and practices that constitutes a community, to which he is introduced.[17] But, what kind of transformation is it? We might say that through the worshiping activity the single subject loses his self-centeredness and opens himself up to the divine content.

From this we can deduce, as Hegel argues, that not only is the cultic dimension central for the conception of religion, but, *pace* Spinoza, that it is the *public* and *liturgical* form that truly matters, because only this kind of praxis is actually intersubjective and conforms to norms.

At the same time, Hegel emphasizes the fact that this praxis cannot be something purely exterior. Real and perfect cultus extends also to interior life. Put in other terms, real exteriority also includes interiority. The transformation that occurs through the participation in the divine rites sinks

17 Lewis (2011), 169–78.

therefore into the deep nature of the subject and generates a kind of second nature.

Against this background, one can observe that Hegel, in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, differentiates three forms of cultus according to their level of perfection.

In the first place, we have the dimension of devotion, which is more than simple faith, because it implies a first appropriation of the content and therefore a first form of self-transcendence on the side of the subject. The second form, by contrast, is a type of cultus which remains at the level of sensuous expression. Here we find, for example, the sacraments and cultic actions, such as sacrifices.

The highest form is, finally, the one in which the human being dismisses his own subjectivity, not only at a superficial level, but at a deeper one. It is, in other words, a sacrifice of one's own heart.

This reference to the contrition of heart is particularly interesting, since it resembles a famous verse of Scripture (Ps. 51:16–7 International Translation):

> You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise.

This passage can be understood in Hegelian terms to mean that the proper and real sacrifice, and therefore the proper cultic act, is the one which does not remain at the surface, but transforms the whole of subjectivity. From this perspective, we might say that Hegel assumes and translates in philosophical terminology a development of the notion of the cultus that is present in Scripture too, namely a form of progressive 'spiritualization of the cultic activity.' This spiritualization does not imply however, in Spinozistic terms, an exclusion of the exterior dimension, but a union of interiority and exteriority.[18]

The most important aspect for our research, however, is the fact that, at the end of this hierarchical description, Hegel explicitly mentions philosophy, and links it directly with the concept of the cultus. Philosophy is, in other words, a 'continual cultus,' for it has as its object:

> the true, and the true in its highest shape, as absolute spirit, as God. To know this true not only in the simple form as God, but also to know

18 In Hegel's words (2007), 446: 'The third and highest form within the cultus is when one lays aside one's won subjectivity – not only practices renunciation in external things such as possessions, but offers one's heart or inmost self to God and senses remorse and repentance in this inmost self […].'

> the rational in God's works – as produced by God and endowed with reason.

At the same time, this knowledge of the Absolute has a sweeping impact on the subject itself, because this knowledge of the truth implies that

> one should dismiss one's subjectivity, the subjective fancies of personal vanity, and concern oneself with the true purely in thought, conducting oneself solely in accordance with objective thought. This negation of one's specific subjectivity is an essential and necessary moment.
>
> (Hegel 2007: 446–7)[19]

In other words, philosophy is complete cultus, because it both thematizes the True in itself (i.e. that which is really worthy of worship), and it also generates a deeper transformation of the subject.

What are the consequences of this association of philosophy and cultus? First of all, we might say, in continuity with what we discussed in the previous part, that philosophy is fundamentally theocentric. We might at this juncture also add that this implies that philosophy is not just an objectifying theory. On the contrary, speculative philosophy is an activity, and in fact a way of life. At the same time, this dynamic is one of strong normative character. These norms are not, however, just exterior rules, for, once again, this normalized activity sinks in the philosophical subject and generates a fundamental transformation which is necessary to grasp absolute truth.

After this long explication, we can go back now to the Hegelian conception of the Idea and its philosophical analysis. We have seen that the Idea in itself is the truth. It is therefore the Absolute (the *ontos on*), and, at the same time, it is epistemically accessible. Besides, the Idea is Life and this means that it has an all-embracing and systematic character.

Now, the truth as life is still unconscious, it is *knowable* truth, but it is not yet *known* truth. In other words, the cognitive dimension of truth has to be explicated, so that it might be all-embracing und thus utterly absolute. Expressed in negative terms, the phenomenon of life lacks the aspect of subjectivity.

This last dimension is connected with that which Hegel calls *knowing* (*das Erkennen*). This aspect of the Idea has, on the one hand, a theoretical dimension (it is cognition in the narrow sense of the word) and in this sense it is characterized by receptivity, but it also has, by contrast, a practical side. Knowing is therefore also willing.[20]

19 On this theme, see the insightful observations made by Houlgate (2005), 242-75.

20 Hegel conceives of the Idea not just as the idea of the Truth but also the idea of the Good. In still other words, absolute truth implies not just the fact that truth has a realistic dimension, but also Vico's fundamental intuition, namely the fact that the truth has *to be made*

In light of this, we might conclude that this dimension of willing is a sort of logico-metaphysical groundwork of what constitutes the cultus, for this is, as we saw above, a practical activity which presupposes theoretical access. It is also noteworthy that Hegel himself in describing the cultus, refers repeatedly to the notion of the will.

Another point of commonality should be touched upon. We have seen before that the cultic activity implies a purification of self-centeredness, insofar as it pertains to the subject. This dimension is also found in the chapter on the will, for the willing activity is an essential element of the disclosure of truth, and therefore an explication of the Idea, but it is at the beginning still a *finite* will. What does this finitude consist of? We might say that the finitude is related to the fact that the will is subjective and that the good that it intends to realize is separate from the truth, and therefore disconnected from the real nature of things.[21] The overcoming of this finitude consists therefore in a rationalization of the will and this means that the will has to become universal and to lose, as it happens in the case of the cultic dynamic, its self-centeredness and particularity.

6.4 The Absolute Idea and the Cultus

What is the result of the negation of this finitude and of this rationalization of the will? It is, in the context of logic, the 'absolute Idea.' What characterizes it? The absolute Idea can be regarded as the unity of the phenomenon of life (Idea in itself) and knowing (Idea for itself). The absolute Idea is, in other words, the Idea in and for itself.

Now, in which sense is this result connected with the cultus? Let us consider first of all the main features of the absolute Idea. Hegel highlights two points: the absolute Idea is, on the one hand, the absolute truth and all truth, and on the other, it is the self-thinking Idea.

Let us examine this aspect initially from a subjective perspective (knowing), and then from the objective one (the Idea in itself). The negation of the finitude of the will and of its self-centeredness does not only have a negative aspect but, more fundamentally, a positive one[22] because it is a liberating dynamic, through which the real nature of subjectivity is made explicit. This is, however, connected with the fact that the subjective perspective explicating the Idea (knowing) reveals itself as part of the Idea.

But this has an implication concerning the Idea itself, for it appears now as a phenomenon which is fully all-embracing. It is not something objective

(*verum est ipsum factum*). Truth is therefore, not just cognition in the narrow sense of the word, but also an act of willing.

21 This also implies that the good of the finite will is also a finite one and this means that it is also 'manipulable.'

22 On this twofold dimension of Hegel's conception of cultus, see Williams: 2017, 286–7.

(a sort of substance) that awaits to be discovered and explicated, but it is complete and absolute self-manifestation. It is, once again, absolute truth *and all truth*, and therefore also a truth including its subjective disclosure.

This aspect is also deeply connected with the notion of the cultus, for the cultus is not only theocentric, but also anthropocentric. It is not only an action attributing honor to God, but also an action aiming at salvation and promotion through the divine principle of the human being. In a word, the common element consists in the fact that philosophy and cultic activity generates a sort of 'divinization of the subject,' for the subject turns out to be an element of the divine self-manifestation.

Another possible way of depicting this dynamic is by saying that philosophy is a progressive movement of immanentization, culminating in a conception according to which manifestation is self-manifestation.

This aspect of immanentization is also a fundamental characteristic of the cultus. Hegel himself emphasizes this fact when he writes:

> The cultus involves giving oneself this supreme, absolute enjoyment […]. I take part in it with my particular, subjective personality, knowing myself as this individual included in and with God, knowing myself within the truth (and I have my truth only in God).
>
> (Hegel 2007: 443)[23]

In a word, cultus is the sublation of the separation between God and religious consciousness, which can only occur in the moment in which religious consciousness transcends itself and grasps itself as a moment of the self-manifesting absolute, as Spirit for Spirit.[24]

This also explains why Hegel (in the passage quoted above in which he characterizes philosophy and therefore absolute knowing as divine service) refers to the subject as being *in* philosophy. This means once again that speculative philosophy is not just an objectifying theory, but is a cultic dynamic which is capable of elevating the subject and including him in the self-manifesting dynamic of the Absolute.

We might consider this cultic aspect also from another point of view. In describing the dynamic of willing and the sublation of its finitude, Hegel writes:

> While what matters for intelligence is merely taking the world, as it *is*, the will by contrast, is bent on making the world what it *ought* to

23 Concerning this theme, see Desmond (2017), particularly 56–2.

24 In this sense it is possible to state that Hegel develops a line of thought that characterizes the Christian mystic tradition. Dante Alighieri, for example, describes his path towards God in his Paradise as an 'indiarsi' (a moving into God) and as a 'trasumanar' (to transhumanize, to pass beyond the human).

> be. The immediate, what it finds before it, counts for the will, not as a fixed being, but instead only as a semblance [*Schein*], as something in itself vacuous. Here those contradictions come to the fore in which one stumbles around on the standpoint of morality. This in general is the standpoint of the *Kantian* and even also the *Fichtean* philosophy in a practical context [*Beziehung*]. The good is supposed to be realized; one has to work to produce it, and the will is only the good activating itself. But then, were the world as it is supposed to be, the activity of willing would fall by the wayside.
>
> (Hegel 2015: §234 Ad., 298)

The interesting point of this passage lies in the fact that the finitude of the will is linked with the concept of work. In Aristotelian terms, this would mean that this activity has a poietic dimension, whose purpose transcends the activity itself. For this reason, the attainment of the purpose implies the cessation of the activity.

Now, reconciliation is a purification of the will and has both a poietic and practical dimension (again in the Aristotelian sense of the word), for it has also an effect on the nature of the will and its action. The final result is, however, accomplished in the moment in which the practical and theoretical Idea are unified. This means that reconciliation is not just a form of *bios praktikos*, but it is more properly a *bios theoretikos*, in which the pure activity of reason comes to the fore.

Considering this, one may say that the cultus expressed through philosophy is a way of living in which every kind of external goal is overcome and pure contemplation is attained.

In this sense, we might say that the position developed by Hegel shows some affinities to the one later developed by the Catholic philosopher Josef Pieper, for, according to Pieper, the cultus lies at the basis of the phenomenon of the feast, meaning that it provides a paradigm for a way of living that breaks the ordinary functionalistic rules of the working-day, thus opening a space in which sheer gratuity reigns supreme. The essence of the cultus is therefore related to the essence of leisure, and hence with the contemplative life (cf. Pieper 1998).[25]

25 This aspect has been emphasized by Desmond (1992), 131: 'Without denying work's necessity, the speculative Hegel, with Aristotle, looks to the end of toil in the highest activity, an activity not itself instrumental work but leisure. Philosophy looks to leisure, is itself leisure, *skolē*, an activity enjoyed as an end in itself, a goal whole within itself, yet open, making the human being at home with being's otherness […] Speculative thinking then is not simply the production of human will.' Hegel himself says: It 'demands abandonment to the very life of the object.' This abandonment is reason's release to what is more ultimate than the obstinacies of closed self-will, its willing openness to the hierophany of the manifested otherness of what is absolute in the concrete.'

6.5 Concluding Observations: The Cultic Dimension of Absolute Spirit

The cultic dimension that we have outlined has concentrated exclusively on the first part of Hegel's systematic project, i.e. the logic. The all-embracing (and therefore encyclopedic) explication of the Idea is, however, the one related to Spirit (*Geist*) and particularly to its fullest expression, i.e. to absolute Spirit.

This final manifestation of the Idea might, in turn, be conceived of as a knowledge of the absolute Idea. It is a knowledge, however, which is more concrete than the one expressed in the logic, since the subject knowing the idea is one in 'flesh and blood.' It is, in other words, a subject including also the dimension of nature. At the same time, this natural subject is one which has freed itself from its finitude, and thus has elevated itself to the absolute.

Now, absolute Spirit is articulated in three parts: art, religion and philosophy. Art emphasizes particularly the pure cognitive aspect (the knowability) of absolute Spirit itself. It is therefore a form of theoretical spirit which does not include completely the subjective and practical side, of this absolute cognition.

This last dimension is particularly emphasized in religion. For religion is, once again, the expression of the fact that absolute Spirit is *for Spirit*. This means also that religion is associated with the dimension that characterizes the cultic activity, i.e. the fundamental existence of finite subjectivity. At the same time, the role of the cultus in the context of the chapter on revealed religion in the *Encyclopedia* is connected with the aspect of reconciliation with the divine principle. In other words, in and through the cultus, the finite mode of representation, and thus the remaining separation of religious consciousness and God, is sublated (Hegel 2017: §565, 264).

This reconciliation is however something, as Hegel himself notices, which is also performed by philosophy. But this would suggest, as previously outlined, that philosophy itself is cultus. One might say philosophy is the *better* cultus because it is a spiritual activity which is more internal and, at the same time, more universal.

But what is the result of the *Encyclopedia* according to this perspective? What kind of worldview emerges from this religiously oriented interpretation? In an interesting passage at the end of the chapter on the absolute Idea, Hegel describes the perspective that we gain on the entire logical system, after we have reached this absolute point of view:

> This is, furthermore, the philosophical view that everything that appears limited, taken for itself, acquires its worth through inhering in the whole and being a moment of the idea. […] Each of the stages considered up to this point is an *image* of the absolute.
>
> (Hegel 2015: § 237 Ad., 300)

If we extend this position to the entire system, we can say that, from the completely developed encyclopedical perspective, all of reality appears as a clear image of the Absolute. Or, to put it in theological terms, the glory of God manifests itself as something which shines everywhere and penetrates the entire universe. In a word, God is an all in all.[26]

But this is also, to conclude, an aspect which links the Hegelian *Encyclopedia* system with the cultic attitude, inasmuch as liturgical cultus can also be understood as the way through which human beings celebrate and give thanks to the divine glory.[27] In even stronger terms: the fully articulated *Encyclopedia* project might be understood as the expression of true worship, because only in philosophy is the all-embracing divine manifestation fully present. Hence, the philosophical cultus can be understood as the real 'heavenly liturgy' that religious consciousness tends to conceive of as something transcendent and separated.

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26 Taking this view, it is possible to say that the perspective of the fully displayed *Encyclopedia* shows some similarity with the one that has been, for example, developed by Saint Bonaventure; according to the medieval philosopher, the entire universe is, if correctly apprehended, an image articulated in different levels of the one divine principle.

27 Von Hildebrandt (2016), 2 writes for example: 'The liturgy is not primarily intended as a means of sanctification or an ascetic exercise. Its primary intention is to praise and glorify God.'

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7 Between Religion and the Empirical Sciences

Hegel's Concept of Philosophical Science According to the Introduction to the Encyclopedia

Friedrike Schick

7.1 Introduction

What makes a science a philosophical one? It may not come as a surprise that a book titled 'Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences' deals with this subject in its introduction. However, there is something surprising in the way Hegel answers that question, placing philosophy between the empirical sciences and religion. According to the Introduction (i.e. §§ 1–18 of the Encyclopedia [1830]), a philosophical science shares essential features with either of its non-philosophical neighbors without melting into one of them. Philosophy differs from both in overcoming specific deficiencies inherent in the empirical sciences as well as in religion. As is equally clear from the outset, Hegel does not hold the view that philosophy should or could replace either the empirical sciences or religion. Nevertheless, he regards philosophy as the target of scientific as well as of religious thinking. Even in this abstract outline, Hegel's defining philosophy's task and nature invites to rethink and examine it. Anyway, there are much more familiar views about science, religion and philosophy. Many people think that religion and the empirical sciences quite rightly coexist in a neutral way, their past quarrels definitely put to rest by Kantian arguments and institutional separation. Looked at that way, neither religion nor the empirical sciences seem to need, let alone to leave room for, a philosophical science that would function as an intermediary or a synthesis between them. Accordingly, there is a much more common dichotomic way to locate philosophy in relation to science and religion. Someone who takes philosophy to be a science among sciences usually does not regard philosophy as akin to religion at the same time; and someone who takes philosophy to be akin to religion, usually means to assign a task to it that cannot be fulfilled by any science.

This paper aims at elucidating Hegel's idea of philosophical science and the arguments he provides in the course of the Introduction. The overarching question is: can philosophy be defined as an intermediary between the empirical sciences and religion without consuming either and without

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getting self-contradictory by too much multi-tasking – and if not, is there anything to be learnt from Hegel's account? Hegel himself, at any rate, was well aware of his contemporaries' disapproval of such an idea of philosophy, as is manifest from the following lines in the final part of the Encyclopedia:

> It is on the ground of form that philosophy has been reproached and accused by the religious party; just as conversely its speculative content has brought the same charges upon it from a self-styled philosophy – and from a pithless orthodoxy. It had too little of God in it for the former; too much for the latter.[1]

In order to comprehend Hegel's double-track locating of philosophy in relation to the empirical sciences on the one hand and to religion on the other, this paper follows the three-part division of the category 'thinking' ('Denken') that is developed in the Introduction, leading finally to philosophy's specific definition. First, philosophy 'may initially be defined as the *thoughtful examination* [*denkende Betrachtung*] of things.'[2] Thinking is philosophy's wider genus, its domain, but not yet its specific definition. Secondly, within the general sphere of thinking philosophy belongs to 'thinking over' ('Nachdenken') or 'reflective thinking' ('reflektierendes Denken')[3], in contrast to representational thinking or, more generally spoken, 'representation' ('Vorstellung').[4] Thirdly, within the sphere of reflective thinking, philosophy has its proper characteristic in being 'comprehending' ('begreifend')[5] or 'speculative' ('spekulativ')[6] rather than 'merely understanding' ('nur verständiges')[7] reflective thinking, the latter prevailing in the empirical sciences, as well as in pre-Kantian metaphysics. As we shall see in more detail, Hegel regards this taxonomy of thinking as teleologically structured: there is a progress from representation through understanding to comprehending or speculative thinking. Seen from this angle, representation is not only the coordinate species to reflective thinking but also the preliminary stage and basis for the latter, which in turn carries out epistemic purposes inherent in the former. The same teleological nature applies to the relation between merely understanding or merely reflective and speculative thinking. Following these tracks, the second part of this paper is concerned with the distinction and connection between thinking as representing and thinking as reflecting, the third part with the internal distinction within reflective thinking, which turns out to be essential for Hegel's account of

1 Enc § 573 remark, Hegel 1894: 304f.
2 Enc § 2, Hegel 2010: 28.
3 Enc § 2 remark, Hegel 2010: 29.
4 Enc § 3 remark, Hegel 2010: 30f.
5 Enc § 2, Hegel 2010: 29.
6 Enc § 9, Hegel 2010: 37.
7 Enc § 11, Hegel 2010: 39.

the relationship between empirical and philosophical science. The fourth part treats the relation between philosophy as speculative thinking and religion. According to this comparison philosophy shares its object and content, which is absolute truth, with religion while differing from religion in its form. Whereas religion *represents* absolute truth, thus combining the elementary form with the most advanced content, philosophy *comprehends* absolute truth in the forms of the concept. A fifth part draws a twofold conclusion related to the overarching question. At any rate, the result of this paper will be limited in two respects. What we can get by this introductory account of philosophical science, will not amount to the complete Hegelian concept of philosophy. For the sake of brevity, I have to leave aside the internal differentiation of philosophy into a system of certain philosophical sciences, as well as the history of philosophy with its interrelation to the abstract concept of philosophy.[8]

7.2 Thinking as Representing and Thinking as Reflection

What is meant by 'representing' or 'representation'? A first and presumably the most general idea thereof may be gotten from the remark added to Enc § 3.

> Given that the determinacies of feeling, intuition, desire, volition, etc., insofar as we are *conscious* of them, are usually called *representations*, it can be said quite generally that philosophy replaces representations with *thoughts* and *categories*, but more specifically with *concepts*.[9]

In its broader sense representation is identical with *intentionality*, the form in which the epistemic subject faces the content of its conscious life as objects, setting herself apart from them in being aware of them as being her own. But there is also a narrower sense in which representing is characterized as the development of a first explicit form of capturing something in terms of the *universal* and the *particular*, or of the *universal* and the *individual*. Forming universals is closely connected with gaining objectivity: to be aware of something in a universal form means to tell it apart from the contingent ways in which it occurred to me, impressed me or had a practical impact on me.[10] In representation, contents of consciousness are captured

8 In order to obtain a broader understanding of Hegel's encyclopedic concept of philosophy, see the chapters by Dean Moyar and Sebastian Stein in this volume. Moreover, the issue of this article also borders on the question of how Hegel's conception of philosophy is related to metaphysics and to transcendental philosophy. As to this issue see, e.g. Koch 2014, Pippin 2015 and Bowman, Kreines, Pinkard, Tolley 2017.

9 Enc § 3 remark, Hegel 2010: 30f.

10 See the elaborated version of Hegel's theory of representation ('Vorstellung') in Enc §§ 451–64, Hegel 1894: 214–29.

as individual entities that can be traced in time and space, entities that are intersubjectively accessible, re-identifiable tokens of general types, which in turn are distinguished from their instantiations and variations. A *name* for the object represented can be regarded as the keystone of representation, because the name indicates that we have identified a 'one' over and through the numerically and qualitatively manifold occurrences and appearances. The natural companion of coining and using names is the faculty to *describe* the bearer of the name, thereby telling it apart from its conceptual neighbors and its real environment.

In what way does representation in the narrow sense pave the way for thinking in the sense of 'reflective thinking' or 'thinking over'?[11] The two expressions themselves give a first hint: to reflect or to think over means to return to a content that has already been present to the mind in the form of representation. This recurrence is no mere repetition of what we already knew; rather, it aims at determining the content of that very *unity* of the object that is indicated in the name for this object. In objectively representing a content of consciousness we already presuppose *that* the object remains one in the diversity of its occurrences and determinations, but it is one thing to presuppose this as a fact, and quite another thing to know *how* this is the case. Reflective thinking strives for determining what it is to be an object of the type concerned, it tries to distinguish between necessary and accidental properties, to capture how its typical properties are interrelated while distinct from one another, and how its properties are related to properties of other objects. All questions of this kind are raised by representation and designed for answers given in the form of reflective thinking. Reflection advances beyond representation just as explaining advances beyond stating the facts that are to be explained. Inasmuch as reflective thinking advances beyond representation, reflection *alters* the content of representation, inasmuch as it does not leave it in the form of juxtaposed or isolated items but tries to get to the bottom of their connection. Nonetheless, reflection can also be said to *preserve* the content of representation, to build on representation and to constructively continue the work of epistemic appropriation that has been pursued by representation, too.

7.3 Empirical Science: Its Nature, Its Insufficiency and the Step to Speculative Thinking

Within the limits of his purpose to determine philosophical science, Hegel briefly discusses the empirical sciences of the modern age in sections 7 to 9 of the Introduction. He alludes to the fact that those sciences used to be called *philosophy* as well as *empirical* – the latter according to its starting point, the former according to its orientation towards 'the knowledge of

11 Enc § 3 remark, Hegel 2010: 29.

fixed measures and what is *universal* [*das Allgemeine*] in the sea of empirical particulars, and with what is *necessary*, such as the *laws* governing the seemingly chaotic and infinite mass of contingent things.'[12] So, at the outset there is no need to divide science into exclusively empirical sciences on the one hand and exclusively philosophical sciences on the other. One and the same science can be looked at as empirical and as philosophical, where empirical and philosophical are just two connected aspects of the one nature of science. As Hegel emphasizes, either aspect is indispensable for science to achieve its aim: taking its content 'from its *own* intuition and perception of the outer and inner world, from its immediate rapport with nature and its immediate rapport with the spirit and the human heart'[13] has been constitutive for the flourishing of modern science.

On closer view, two decisive features can be derived from Hegel's account that make experience the adequate starting point for scientific knowledge. First, experience (systematic observation, collecting and ordering included, as one may well add to Hegel's text) delivers and enriches the *material*, the realm of phenomena that are potential objects of knowledge. In this way, the explicit ascertainment of experience by the pioneers of modern science has broadened our horizons as against accidentally restricted ways of looking at things. Secondly, there is the aspect of 'own-ness' in experience, as the remark to § 7 elaborates:

> The principle of *experience* contains the infinitely important determination that human beings must themselves be *involved* when taking up a given content and holding it to be true, more precisely that they must find such content to be united and in unison with *the certainty of themselves*.[14]

For sure, these views do not make Hegel an outright empiricist. Experience is the indispensable starting point but by no means the end of the process of knowing. Experience invites to or even demands reflective investigation of the abundant materials it has delivered just because these materials bear the form of representation only. As represented, they appear as juxtaposed

12 Enc § 7, Hegel 2010: 35.

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid. Both achievements of the principle of experience are further explained in connection with the shortcomings of abstract metaphysics in Enc §§ 37+38. Especially the remark added to § 38 points to the benefits that lay in the core of empiricism, in its return to what there is against merely subjective 'oughts' as well as in its insisting on the intersubjective universality of truth and claims to truth: 'As far as the subjective side is concerned, the important principle of *freedom*, which is part of empiricism, must be recognized as well. This principle means that what a human being is supposed to let stand in his knowing [*Wissen*], he has to see *himself*, knowing [*wissen*] *himself* to be *present* in the process' (Enc § 38 remark, Hegel 2010: 79).

items, which, at the same time, show in one way or another – primarily by leading to contradictions between statements thought to be equally certain – that they are connected with one another, contrary to the ways of grasping and conceptualizing them so far. This is where the methods and categories of reflective thinking in the narrower sense of the term come into play: categories of the kind treated in Hegel's 'logic of essence'[15] and ways of judgment and of reasoning treated under the headings of 'judgment of reflection'[16] and 'syllogism of reflection.'[17]

Now, in the early stages of reflective thinking, science is limited in two respects, according to the Introduction. It is limited in *content*, and it is limited with regard to *form*, and this twofold limitation cannot be overcome by using the hitherto employed methods and categories but demands new ways of conceptualization and reasoning. As to content, there is a domain of objects that are not captured by a merely reflective science about empirical materials, 'namely freedom, spirit, and God.'[18] As to form, science in that stage does not match the demands of necessity implicit in its concepts and judgments. It will help to get a deeper understanding of the limit with regard to content if we begin by elaborating Hegel's diagnosis with regard to the limits of form.

The formal shortcoming of a science in the stage of *mere reflection* or, to vary just the expression, of *mere understanding* partly concerns the inner organization of the contents, partly the existence of unmediated starting points.

Let us start with the lack in respect of *inner organization*. Reflective thinking in its first form, the form of understanding, surpasses representational thinking in connecting contents hitherto grasped in isolation against each other. For example, reflection reconsiders contents that seemed to be self-standing qualities, simply distinct from one another, as results of certain quantitative variations of one underlying quality, transforming qualitative difference into matters of degree. Or reflection fixes law-like proportions, regular covariations between otherwise independently defined entities, rethinking qualities as calculable factors (or, vice versa, as analyzable) within more comprehensive schemes. Another, rather advanced example for logical connections that go beyond mere representation is the relation of *causality*.[19] Its progress beyond mere representation notwithstanding, reflective thinking keeps up a certain externality between the contents thus

15 Compare Hegel's introductory remark to the logic of essence: 'This (the most difficult) part of logic contains pre-eminently the categories of metaphysics and the sciences in general' (Enc § 224 remark, Hegel 2010: 177).

16 See Enc § 174–6, Hegel 2010: 248–50.

17 See Enc § 190, Hegel 2010: 261–63.

18 Enc § 8, Hegel 2010: 36.

19 For systematic reconstructions of the transition from the logic of causality to the logic of the concept see, e.g. Houlgate 2000 and Schick 2014.

connected. While there are forms of necessity (essences, primary qualities, necessary connections and the like), the necessities themselves retain a flair of arbitrariness or accidentality. What Hegel's Logic of Essence shows in much more detail I can only briefly summarize: all those relations, from relations of measure to relations of causality, point further to an underlying affinity in the concepts of the related terms, an affinity that is not yet manifest in the relational formulas themselves. Let us take the relation of causality as an example and let us assume the following nominal definition of causality: a phenomenon of type A is to a phenomenon of type B as the cause is to its effect, if and only if phenomena of type A make it necessary for phenomena of type B to come into being. This is a clear case of necessary connection, but it is combined with sheer diversity between the types involved, given that the types remain defined in phenomenal descriptions (like lightning and thunder, or like push and roll). Types of such a kind present themselves as qualitatively different and separated from one another, according to how they are grasped in sense perception. Therefore, it remains unclear wherein the types involved give rise to those causal connections. As necessary connections relations of cause and effect point to connections that are presupposed in the concepts of the things involved but not yet spelled out in their phenomenal or experimental conceptions. At this state of the art of knowing the categories or logical forms appear as

> products of the understanding insofar as it reflects, assuming the differences to be *self-standing* and at the same time also positing their relativity, but merely combining both aspects as next to and after one another through an 'also,' without bringing these thoughts together and unifying them into a concept.[20]

As to the *concept* (the subject of the third part of Hegel's Science of Logic), it follows from what has already been said about merely reflective thinking that 'unifying' connected thoughts 'into a concept' means more than what is meant when we normally talk about concepts. As the difference between concepts that are 'abstract universals' (as Hegel calls them) and concepts in the sense of Hegel's Logic matches the epistemic progress from merely reflective to speculative thinking, it is worth looking into it.[21] Enc § 9 characterizes the merely reflective way to think in the forms of universality and particularity as follows:

> Regarding the scientific manner mentioned above [§ 7], the *universal* that it contains (such as the genus, etc.) is on the one hand left

20 Enc § 224 remark, Hegel 2010: 177.

21 For a detailed account of how Hegel's concept of the concept differs from merely 'abstract universals' see, e.g. Winfield 2012: 207–22.

> indeterminate for itself and is not intrinsically connected to the particular [*das Besondere*]. Instead, both are external and contingent in relation to each other, as are likewise the combined particularities vis-à-vis each other in their reciprocal relationship.[22]

A hierarchic taxonomy corresponding to this description would come from genus to species just by adding different features not yet contained in the nominal definition of the genus. The genus then differs from its species merely in being relatively indefinite. The species-concepts repeat the content of their genus-concept and differ otherwise accidentally from one another. In such a way of conceptualization and classification, identity and difference between coordinate types remain totally unconnected though any exemplar of those types is thought of as substantially one. For sure, this is not to claim that each and every object domain of reflective thinking will correspond to a non-additive model of classification. As Hegel recognizes, there are cases (in nature,[23] for example, or in jurisprudence[24]) where the ultimate specific differences are objectively contingent in relation to generic commonalities. But there are other subject areas where the lack of immanent relations is due to the method, the limited ways of conceiving of those subjects. (Logic can be mentioned here as a prominent example; the scientific treatment of the human mind as another.)

On this basis, we can also understand how and why the *starting points* of empirical sciences 'are throughout *immediacies*, *accidental findings*, *presuppositions*.'[25] At its beginning, reflective thinking proceeds in first versions of concepts, versions that are already oriented towards grasping the nature or essence of its objects but leave it to chance if and how far the selected features represent that nature or essence. Therefore, the prescientific consensus or the dominating general representation determines the content of definitions in the first stage of reflective thinking.

So far, we have elaborated the *formal* limits of empirical science. Before we turn to the limits concerning its content, it is worth mentioning that the limits of empirical science and its empirical character are not connected in the way we might have expected. Hegel does not take it for granted that a science that starts in experience will once and for all remain restricted in the ways just described. Starting in experience involves provisional concepts, classifications and categories; but the start must not be taken for the

22 Enc § 9, Hegel 2010: 37.

23 See Science of Logic, part 3: 'In *nature*, of course, there are to be found more than two species in a genus, just as between these many species there cannot exist the relationship we have just indicated. This is the impotence of nature, that it cannot adhere to and exhibit the strictness of the Notion and runs wild in this blind irrational [*begriffslos*] multiplicity.' (Hegel 1989: 607).

24 See Enc § 16 remark, Hegel 2010: 44.

25 Enc § 9, Hegel 2010: 37.

finish. This is where Hegel and many of his contemporaries, as well as many of his successors, go their separate ways. According to Hegel there is no need to remain restricted to those ambivalent forms of thinking as cause-effect, abstract universals and the like, forms that leave the empirical content somehow indifferent against its forms of conception and explanation. The step to *concept* in Hegel's sense of the term, or from abstract to concrete universal, presents itself as rationally derivable within the continuum of understanding. To put it another way: to start in experience does not deliver a criterion to tell empirical science apart from philosophy, because philosophy turns out to be the advanced stage of the very project that starts as empirical science. Accordingly, philosophy profits from empirical science, acknowledges and uses its content; as to its forms, it does not negate them altogether, either, but 'develops them further and transforms them with the help of additional categories.'[26]

As to the limits of the described empirical knowledge in *content*, Hegel writes: there is 'yet another domain of *objects* that are not contained therein, namely freedom, spirit, and God.'[27] This statement is similar to Kant's distinction between objects of possible experience on the one hand and ideas on the other, but there are interesting differences, too. First, Hegel's list differs slightly from Kant's, containing no equivalent to the idea of the world as a whole, the subject of rational cosmology in pre-Kantian metaphysics. Secondly, and more important, Hegel's explanation for that limit in content differs from explanations of the kind Kantians and empiricists provide. He writes:

> The reason why they cannot be found in that sphere is not that they are supposedly not a part of experience; they are not experienced by way of the senses, it is true, but whatever is present in consciousness is being experienced – this is even a tautological sentence. Rather, they are not found in that sphere, because in terms of their *content* these objects immediately present themselves as infinite.[28]

Why does Hegel think that consciousness of x is equivalent to having an experience of x? Certainly, Hegel is not unaware of the fact that consciousness allows for mistakes, illusions and false beliefs. Therefore, we should not misread his statement as the hazardous thesis that whatever belongs to the content of somebody's consciousness also exists independently of that consciousness. What Hegel maintains can be more plausibly understood as follows: being conscious of x entails the conscious subject's capability for further examination of x, aiming at finding out its truth. Hegel's argument

26 Enc § 9, Hegel 2010: 37.
27 Enc § 8, Hegel 2010: 36.
28 Enc § 8, Hegel 2010: 36.

excludes the assumption of an unsurmountable barrier between us and the comprehension of what we are already conscious of, that is, is present to us in the way of representation. This critique of the familiar talk about 'limits of experience' notwithstanding, Hegel obviously agrees with empiricism and with Kant in stating a limit of the empirical sciences when it comes to 'freedom, spirit, and God.' In the light of the foregoing account of the formal limits of empirical science, we may read his explanation as follows: freedom, spirit and God share one substantial feature in that they are clear-cut examples of *self-determination* (which might be less clear for the missing item of the world); and self-determination cannot be grasped in the forms of mere reflective thinking or within the categories of essence. Why is that? As we have seen above, connections of this kind take their objects in an ambiguous way, that is, as essentially determined by other objects, on the one hand, and as independent, on the other hand. Thinking in these forms cannot but misrepresent forms of determination where an object determines itself *in* relating to others.[29]

The reflective thinking that promises to advance beyond the limits in form as well as beyond the correlated limits in content is called 'speculative thinking' or 'speculative science,' a denotation that also denotes philosophy. For the sake of brevity, I limit myself on reconstructing the *formal* progress achieved in speculative or truly philosophical thinking, according to Hegel. The progress will have to meet the nature of the shortcoming it is meant to overcome. The shortcoming consisted in a lack of necessity, in spite of the fact that versions of necessary connections between empirical items had already come into play, as the case of causality exemplified. In that case, the sortal concepts of the entities involved as cause and effect respectively showed no sign of how and why it is that both seem to be necessarily connected. Accordingly, the epistemic progress consists in exploring the nature of both types of entities, a nature such that it can explain the aforesaid causal connection. In other words, the progress consists in a qualified return to the question of what things of the relevant types are in themselves, a question preliminarily answered by our prescientific representations, and now renewed in the light of generalized discoveries about relations, covariations and patterns of behavior of the objects of the kinds involved. According to this interpretation both of the Introduction and of the Logic, this return of questions about definition constitutes the step from essence to concept in the Science of Logic as well as the epistemic step from empirical to philosophical science.

29 I have to leave it for another occasion to show that this interpretation corresponds with Hegel's theory of infinity, too – a concept that, according to Hegel's analysis in the Science of Logic, is not limited to the possibility of continuation ad infinitum but turns out to be being for oneself in relation to other – the most abstract logical form of self-determination. Compare Enc § 95, Hegel 2010: 150f.

As we already saw, 'the concept' in Hegel's sense of the term is not equivalent to 'the concept' in the familiar sense of general representation. What is special to the concept in Hegel's sense can be explicated in terms of the epistemic progress just described. Whereas the universal concept of a domain of objects initially came to be 'the' defining universal of that domain just because it contained those features that happened to attract our attention most, the renewal of conceptual questions asks for a universal that qualifies as 'the' universal only if it proves itself as the *principle* of such objects. The universal of the concept in this specific sense is the adequate explanatory starting point for explaining the differentiations that are typical for objects of that kind.

From this point of view one may easily conclude how this progress in form may enable a more adequate grasp of self-determined beings, too. When we reconstruct what formerly was conceived of as external necessity as founded in the nature of the things involved, we trace determination from without, without denying it, back to what things are in themselves. Of course, this is only the beginning of a much longer story that would elaborate the connections between concept and freedom in its concrete versions, spelled out first at the end of Hegel's Science of Logic and continued in the following parts of the philosophical system.

7.4 Religion: Its Nature, Its Insufficiency and the Step to Speculative Thinking

As early as in the first section of the Encyclopedia, Hegel tells his readers that philosophy shares its subject or content with religion, differing from religion in form. Philosophy translates into the form of the concept what religion conceives of in the form of representation. He discusses this comparative determination of philosophy and religion in close connection with a problem that was much discussed at that time, namely the problem of the *beginning* of philosophical science – a beginning we shall begin with without presupposing anything, that is, without having anything to begin with.

According to § 1, philosophy is at a disadvantage with other sciences:

> Philosophy lacks the advantage which the other sciences benefit, namely the ability to *presuppose* both its *objects* as immediately endorsed by representation of them and an acknowledged *method* of knowing, which would determine its starting-point and progression.[30]

At first sight, there seems to be some help from the side of religion which already owns the relevant content in representational form:

30 Enc § 1, Hegel 2010: 28.

> It is true that philosophy initially shares its objects with religion. Both have the *truth* for their object, and more precisely the truth in the highest sense, in the sense that *God* and God *alone* is the truth. Moreover, both treat the sphere of finite things, the sphere of *nature* and the *human spirit*, their relation to each other and to God as their truth.[31]

Seen from this angle, religion seems to be to philosophy what other prescientific representations are to other sciences. Even so, there arises a complication: philosophy cannot rely on religion, cannot receive the truth, and the truth in the highest sense, from religion. It is worthwhile to follow Hegel's reasoning in its detail. He writes:

> While engaged in thoughtful contemplation, however, it soon becomes apparent that such activity includes the requirement to demonstrate the *necessity* of its content, and to *prove* not only its being but, even more so, the determinations of its objects. The aforementioned familiarity with this content thus turns out to be insufficient, and to make or accept *presuppositions* or *assurances* regarding it appears illegitimate.[32]

Therefore, philosophy, as against all other sciences, remains confronted with the substantial problem of beginning without presuppositions, despite the fact that its contents seem to be already present in religion.

This is how matters seem to stand at the end of section one – but, certainly, the argument is worthy a closer look. What does it mean to require demonstrations of 'the *necessity* of its content' in this context? There are two possible versions of this statement:

According to a first version, Hegel simply alludes to the *general* requirement that arises whenever we go from representational to reflective thinking. We have approached this transition in a previous section (7.2). In this case the peculiarities of the content concerned would be of no importance.

According to a second version, Hegel points to a requirement *specific* for the relation between religion and philosophy, a requirement that arises because religion and philosophy are dealing with truth, truth in the highest sense, and the interpretation of nature and human spirit in the light of this truth.

Which version is the right one?

To begin with the first version: it is beyond doubt that the passage just cited alludes to the general requirements connected with the transition from representing to reflective thinking. But if we accept this as the *entire* explanation, we will get caught up in the following contradiction: the *general* requirement is a requirement for *every* science; the requirement Hegel talks

31 Ibid.
32 Ibid.

about at the end of § 1 prevents the science involved from beginning with the object already present in the form of representation; so if the requirement from the end of § 1 were identical with the general requirement, it would prevent every science from beginning with an object delivered by prescientific representation – and this contradicts the aforesaid 'advantage which the other sciences benefit' (ibid.). Or shall we assume that Hegel is not serious in distributing advantage and disadvantage among the sciences the way he does at the beginning of § 1? This would mean to ascribe to Hegel a fundamentalistic position in epistemology, a position that takes the starting points of every science as hypothetical, awaiting categorical affirmation through demonstrations from self-evident first principles. As we have seen in Sections 7.2 and 7.3, presuppositions of reflective thinking are, indeed, open for, and even require 'thinking it over.' But this requirement is not accomplished by setting the content concerned apart in order to look for indubitable first principles instead but by going into it. Moreover, there is no need to prove the *being* of the objects that define the domain of a singular science, as well. Apart from these systematic differences between Hegel's and the fundamentalistic account of presuppositions in science, there is an exegetical argument: it would be rather odd if Hegel opened his general introduction into the Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences by telling the exact opposite of what he means.

In the light of these arguments it seems more reasonable to read the end of § 1 according to the second version, i.e. to assume that the requirement 'to demonstrate the *necessity* of its content' is intrinsically linked to the *specific* case of religion, philosophy and the content common to both, according to the climax already cited: 'the *truth* […] and more precisely the truth in the highest sense, in the sense that *God* and God *alone* is the truth.'[33] As to this object, it is indeed required that even the *being* of it be proved. As far as I can see, there are at least two reasons for this specific requirement.

The first reason is an empirical and historical one. At the beginning of the 19th century, there are hardly any statements about God that seem to be uncontroversial enough in order to be used for defining a common starting point for a projected philosophical theology. This applies to the *object* as well as to the *methods* of grasping it. Concerning *method*, it may suffice to recall the fact that Hegel thought it necessary to elaborate a rich set of arguments for the rather simple-sounding thesis that the object of religion is an object for reflective thinking at all.[34]

33 Ibid.

34 Or we may think of Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi and his arguments against the possibility to meet the *unconditioned* by ways of reasoning and reflection. Again, Hegel takes these arguments very serious, as his discussion of the 'third position of thought towards objectivity,' the standpoint of 'immediate knowing' shows. See Enc § 61–§ 78, Hegel 2010: 109–25.

A second reason arises from the *subject* common to religion and philosophy, 'truth in the highest sense.' As to this point, the introduction of the first edition of the Encyclopedia (the Heidelberg edition of 1817) argues more elaborately than the third edition (which we have consulted up to here). Just like the latter, the Heidelberg Encyclopedia begins with the statement that philosophy can presuppose neither its content nor its method. Concerning its content (to which I will confine myself at this point), Hegel reasons as follows: as soon as this content shall be given as the content of *philosophy* instead of as a content of *representation*, it cannot be given at all, the philosophical mode of knowledge being contrary to the representational mode and being designated to help representation to transcend itself. In an instructive remark added to § 2, Hegel considers an option to communicate the content of philosophy to representational thinking: human beings start their conscious lives with sense perception and desire but soon develop a hunch and sentiment of something more sublime, starting to wonder about the soul, the universe and God, as in religion. But (still according to Enc [1817] § 2) this hint will not do, because it is much too vague, as it does not communicate the *specific* way those objects are given in philosophy. Religion has its *own* resolutions to the great questions of human life; its own doctrines about God, nature and human spirit. Therefore, in alluding to religion, the specific difference between religion and philosophy would get blurred.[35]

The nub of the matter seems to be this: philosophy is to religion *not* exactly what reflective thinking of x is to representational thinking of x because in this particular case the difference in form is an outright difference in content at the same time. Why is that? The content concerned is 'truth in the highest sense.' Now, truth belongs to the step ladder of modes of thinking, too, constituting the final aim of thinking. Unlike 'plant' or 'economy' or 'human being,' 'truth' is not a sortal expression for a certain kind of object but indicates the content of the perfect insight, the adequate view of an object. To put it in Hegelian terms: 'the truth of x' indeterminately indicates what we know when we have derived and developed the *concept* of x.[36] Recalling the development from representational through merely reflective to speculative thinking, we can easily recognize the reason why truth in the highest sense cannot stand at the beginning of this development, but

35 For want of an English translation I quote the most important text passage in German: 'Abgesehen davon, daß solche Fragen und solche Gegenstände selbst sogleich mit Zweifel und Negation empfangen werden können, so enthält schon zum Theil das unmittelbare Bewußtseyn, noch mehr die Religion nach ihrer Weise, die Auflösung jener Fragen und eine Lehre über jene Gegenstände. Aber das Eigenthümliche, wodurch sie *Inhalt* der *Philosophie* sind, ist damit nicht ausgedrückt' (Enc [1817] § 3 remark, Hegel 2001: 16).

36 For sure, Hegel does not maintain that the opening of speculative thinking, the step from merely reflective thinking to concept, already constitutes the final climax of knowing. Nevertheless, this step is conceived of as an important and indispensable one.

has to be the result of deriving the nature of x from preceding views of x. Knowing how and why objects of certain different kinds, or relevant features of one object are related to one another and to the constitutive nature of that object(s) bears the signature of reflecting ('thinking over'), thus presupposing stages of knowledge where those relevant features or patterns of behavior have been identified in the first place. This is the systematic reason why philosophy cannot presuppose truth in the highest sense like an object given before studied.

For the same reason, philosophy cannot be linked to religion as other sciences are linked to experience and representation. As Hegel characterizes religion, religion *represents* truth in the highest sense. But what does it mean to apprehend truth in a representational manner? The most decisive feature in our present context seems to be that truth appears as *an object of its own*, existing beside the imagined totality of objects whose truth it is meant to be.[37] Representation of the truth of x takes the truth of x to be something else than just the nature or the concept of x. If truth in its highest sense appears as an entity of its own it stands to us, the subjects of asking and knowing, as an external presupposition, as a *site of truth* regarding which we may hope or doubt or claim to know that it exists, instead of discovering truth in its highest sense ourselves. What this all amounts to is that philosophy contradicts religion, philosophy having been defined as speculative thinking as described above, and religion having been defined as representational thinking as described above.

Would Hegel subscribe to this conclusion? This question is difficult to answer, considering the fact that Hegel tends to assimilate the relation between religion and philosophy to the more general relation between representing and speculative reflection. According to the Heidelberg Encyclopedia, there clearly is a contradiction between dealing with truth in its highest sense on the one hand and separating it from the consciousness on the other; but Hegel characterizes this contradiction more as an inconsequence within religion than as a universal feature of it:

> Der Gegenstand der Religion ist zwar für sich der unendliche Gegenstand, der Alles in sich befassen soll; aber ihre Vorstellungen bleiben sich nicht getreu, indem ihr auch wieder die Welt ausser dem

37 There is an instructive passage about representation in Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* (1827), in which Hegel deals with different forms of religious representation, such as images, stories and, finally, non-sensible modes of representing. Concerning the latter, he says: 'The spiritual content as it is represented in its simple mode – an action, activity, or relationship in simple form – is of this kind. For instance, the creation of the world is a representation. God himself is this [sort of] representation. God, after all, is the universal that is determined within itself in manifold ways. In the form of representation, however, God is in this simple manner in which we have God on one side and the world at the other' (Hegel 1984: 400f.).

> Unendlichen selbstständig bleibt, und was sie als die höchste Wahrheit angibt, zugleich unergründlich, Geheimniß und unerkennbar, ein Gegebenes, und nur in der Form eines *Gegebenen* und *Aeusserlichen* für das unterscheidende Bewußtseyn bleiben soll.[38]

7.5 Conclusion

So far, we considered the relation between philosophy and empirical science and between philosophy and religion separately. Now it is time to bring both lines of thought together and to return to the general question of this paper. Apart from getting to know how Hegel conceives of philosophy, science and religion and their mutual relations – is there anything to be learnt about philosophy, the empirical sciences and religion, and their mutual relations as such?

As far as I can see, there are at least two conclusions to be drawn from the study of Hegel's introductory definition of philosophy.

(1) In the light of the preceding reasoning, one may well understand why Hegel defines philosophy the way he does. The form of speculative thinking, i.e. the concept, seems to answer the needs of the empirical sciences and the needs of religion, at the same time. If there is a viable way from representing to comprehending the truth of what there is, and if religion is the representational form of the same truth, it seems natural to assume that philosophy as speculative thinking will comprehend what religion represents, thus being positively linked to the empirical sciences as well as to religion. In the light of the arguments considered in section 7.4 above, however, this assumption does not hold. It fails because of the discontinuity between religion and philosophy that is not exhausted in the general distinction between representing and reflecting or between representing and comprehending. In this special case, the opposition in form constitutes a thoroughgoing opposition in content and objective of the respective enterprises, too. If in speculative thinking we learn how to explain phenomena with regard to the comprehended nature of the kinds involved, this remains contrary to conceiving of truth in the form of an entity existing apart.

(2) This critique notwithstanding, there is much to gain from Hegel's approach to localize philosophy. Hegel puts forward very serious (in my eyes: convincing) arguments against the abovementioned familiar view of religion and science. According to the familiar view, science is excluded from dealing with the objects of religion for a material as well as for a formal reason. The object of religion can never be experienced, whereas science requires objects that can be, or indeed are, experienced. Moreover, the reflective forms of comprehending prevent science from comprehending God. To comprehend x is to explain its generation and determinations by reducing

38 Enc (1817), § 5 A; Hegel 2001: 17.

it to another entity, reversing the unconditioned in something conditioned. As to the alleged limit in content, there is Hegel's argument to the contrary cited above, and, even more important, the result that it might be due to restrictions in *specific* forms of thinking that prevent science from grasping self-determining entities. This brings us back to the alleged limits in the form of scientific thinking. The argument in favor of those limits does not take into account the differentiation between merely reflective and speculative reflective thinking. Recalling Hegel's arguments at the turning point from the logic of essence to the logic of the concept, as well as his account of merely reflective and speculative thinking, there shows an immanent reason to advance beyond merely relational forms of explanation (as, for example, causal explanations). What things of the kinds involved are on their own accounts such that they are correlated the ways they are seems to be a perfectly reasonable question. In this respect, Hegel's considerations amount to the discovery of new perspectives for the philosophical disciplines of epistemology and ontology. Moreover, these perspectives have a direct bearing on other sciences as well, above all on sciences that deal with phenomena of self-determination.

In this sense, the enterprise of philosophy's self-reflection can gain a lot from the Introduction, even though it cannot be definitely put to rest in the twofold intermediary way Hegel maintains.

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8 Temporal Strata of Historical Experience in Hegel's *Encyclopedia*

Christopher Yeomans

> 'Die Unterschiede der Zeit haben nicht diese *Gleichgültigkeit* des Außersichseyns, welche die unmittelbare Bestimmtheit des Raums ausmacht; sie sind daher der Figurationen nicht, wie dieser, fähig' (EN§259R).

Introduction

As we celebrate in this volume a temporal milestone – the 200th anniversary of the publication of Hegel's complete presentation of his system of philosophy in the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences* – I want to take the opportunity to explore the way that time itself constitutes a thread running through the different main subject matters of philosophy: logic, nature and spirit. In my view, the key to this thread is the way that it terminates in the historical experience of spirit, an experience that first gives one the robust conceptions of past and future that fill out the minimal conception of time that is present in logic and the philosophy of nature. Specifically, the articulation of philosophy into a logic, a philosophy of nature and a philosophy of spirit can be understood as the systematic development of the actual structure of our historical experience out of first, the pure conceptual form of that experience (Logic); second, temporality as such (Nature); and third, historically-specific social institutions (Spirit).[1] In this way, I hope to offer an historical interpretation of Hegel's well-known characterization of philosophy as a circle of circles in virtue of the fact that each circle pushes beyond itself, and each circle pushes beyond itself because it is a presentation of the whole of which it is a part (Enc. '17 §6 & §6R (GW 13.18–19); also WL 12.252 and EL§15 (GW 20.56)).

To motivate and sharpen this interpretation I make use of a criticism from Heidegger according to which Hegel's theory of time represents the apotheosis of our everyday, unthinking conception of time as being essentially like

1 It is not that logic, nature and spirit are themselves *Zeitschichten*, but rather that each provides a distinctive perspective on the strata and their interaction, which together provide an account of historical experience.

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space, i.e. as being a series of nows one right after the other in the same way that space represents a series of points simply next to each other (SZ §82). As a result, Heidegger thinks, the only connection Hegel can offer between logical concepts, natural time and spiritual history is the abstract formal structure of double negation (Kaufer 2012). But this connection is so formal and abstract that it could connect anything, and move you in any direction, and the formality and resulting arbitrariness of its application seems to doom any Hegelian attempt to do justice to the nature of human experience and furthermore to reveal Hegel's entire encyclopedic structure as unmotivated.

Many Hegel scholars have attempted to defend him from Heidegger's charge, though I think that Heidegger's *characterization* of Hegel's theory of time in the restricted discussion at the beginning of the *Philosophy of Nature* is largely correct. The burden of a response lies in the need to reconstruct the relation between logical concepts, natural time and historical experience, but I remain unconvinced by the extant reconstructions. Here I offer my own, in which the connection turns on the way that historical experience consists of the interaction of multiple temporal perspectives, each manifesting a distinctive kind of logical perspective. The best way to see this is actually to look at the relation between the three parts of Hegel's encyclopedic system.

I want to introduce one more idea in this introduction, this time taken from the German historian Reinhart Koselleck. Koselleck developed a conception of historical times articulated through two important metaphors: that of temporal strata (*Zeitschichten*) and the present as a field of tension (*Spannungsfeld*). Koselleck developed this theory of historical times in part in response to what he considered to be Heidegger's failure to develop an adequate theory of historical times, a failure grounded in the absence of specific social institutions in Heidegger's account. In contrast, Koselleck developed *Zeitschichten* to represent the significance of institutions in their role as metrics of duration and change. This figure of geological strata is in opposition to both linear and cyclical models of historical time. On Koselleck's view, those models each only see one aspect of the picture, since all historical time contains both linear and recurrent elements. Koselleck used the analogy of geological strata (*Schichten*) to articulate the co-occurrence of such elements, which he referred to as the unique (*das Einmalige*), the repeated (*Wiederholungsstrukturen*), and the transcendent (*transzendent*) (Koselleck 2003, 19–26).[2] The historical present results from a sedimentation of these temporal layers of experience and expectation which produces the *Spannungsfeld* or field of tension between these

2 At any rate, this is one of Koselleck's schemes of classification of the different strata. He never came to a consistent or final set of names, though all of the schemes include three basic types of roughly the sort presented here.

different temporal layers. These layers are temporal not primarily in the sense that they are experienced at different times or are expectations of events at different times, but rather in the sense that they refer to different temporal scales. There are layers that are primarily about the *short-term* experience of unique and thus surprising events, layers that are primarily about the *medium-term* accumulation of repeated experience over the course of the life-span of a generation and layers that are about *long-term* systems such as the Roman Empire or Islam (Koselleck 2003: 34–41). In the concrete form of our actual experience, these different temporal scales pull in different directions, opening up a clearing of sorts in which the present of historical experience takes place. Something similar is going on in Hegel's account, and I will use some of Koselleck's language to attempt to illuminate it.

8.1 Logic

Recently, I have begun to develop an interpretation of Hegel's *Science of Logic* that attempts to do justice to the striking pluralism that it exhibits (Yeomans 2019). In particular, I have argued that the three conceptual moments – universality, particularly and individuality –are best understood as perspectives to which any logical object appears. A logical perspective is a way of taking an object that makes certain features salient (and thus others not salient). Put another way: a logical perspective is a way of taking the object that makes the truth or falsity of certain predications of the object qua subject of judgment apposite. Hegel introduces this notion of a logical perspective via the way in which he distinguishes between different kinds of judgments (and, later, syllogisms). In each different kind of judgment, different categories of predicates are picked out as salient. If I want to make a qualitative judgment, then I say 'This plant is red'; whereas if I want to make a judgment of reflection, then I say that 'This plant is healthy.'

Briefly, two metaphors of visual perspective can be used to give structure to this general notion. The first metaphor is that of depth of field in photography. For any lens, there is perfect focus only at a single distance, then there is a range of distances in which the image is approximately focused (the so-called circle of confusion), and then finally there is a range of distances which is unfocused. To make this a metaphor for logical perspective we can say that each logical perspective is a choice of logical distance that makes one group of predicates perfectly salient, another group approximately (or relatively) salient and a third group salient only at the limit (e.g. perhaps counterfactually). Note that the third group is not made false; the true and the false are distinct within each group, much as different colors or shapes could be distinguished within each range of distances. The blurry background of a picture is really still there, and spirit really is not an elephant (this is Hegel's example a 'negative infinite judgment'). Spirit's not being an elephant is not directly salient to much of anything about spirit;

but if, counterfactually, spirit *were* an elephant, that would certainly be salient to almost everything about spirit.[3]

The second metaphor is that of perspective as the anticipation of movement (1961). Perspective in painting works by suggesting what we would see if we shifted our perspective on the object represented in the painting. Since we normally do shift constantly in our visual relations to physical objects, perspectival paintings must suggest what we would have seen were we able to do so and allow us to project that somewhere in the painting. Perspectival paintings then give us three different aspects of the image: the figure itself, a screen on which we project features of the object that we anticipate from the nature of the screen and figure, and lastly those aspects which cannot be projected but must simply be inferred. In this metaphor, a logical perspective picks out one group of potential predicates for direct presentation in judgment, suggests a second group to be projected onto the first, but requires inference to the third set of predicates. This would be a way of thinking about the logical perspectives involved in a syllogism: the major premise presents one group of predicates, the minor another, and then a conclusion reached by inference leads to a third group. In this way of understanding the metaphor, syllogisms are the way we move around objects, and logical perspectives are the way in which each step (judgment) in that moving around is both limited in itself and necessarily related to the other steps. Hegel describes the particularly objective face of those objects in terms of modality, so at each step around the object we are seeing different aspects of its conceptuality combined with different aspects of its modality in the same way that as we move around a physical object we see different combinations of shape and color. To use our metaphor of depth of field, some conceptual features of the object can be seen in focus – i.e. as conceptual – and some are out of focus and thus appear as objective – i.e. as modal. These features bear systematic relations to each other such that many aspects remain blurry from one of the logical perspectives and yet no aspect of the logical object is rendered inaccessible to conceptual perspective as such, since we can always shift perspectives. In fact, we *must* shift perspectives to fully comprehend objects, and this is the sense in which there is not just subjectivity but intersubjectivity in the *Logic*.

We can combine these metaphors in a very brief reconstruction of Hegel's doctrine of the idea, which is the full-blown coordinate system that is supposed to articulate these systematic relations. The key feature is that each of the forms of the idea – life, the true and the good – represent this coordinate system from one of the conceptual perspectives. From its predominantly particular perspective, life can see the particular features of the object in sharp relief, confuses individuals for particulars but thereby renders them in sharp (conceptual form), but cannot form any clear picture of universality

3 Thanks to Morganna Lambeth for pushing me to clarify this point.

which is rendered as an indistinct background of possibility. From its predominantly universal perspective, the theoretical idea can see the universal features of the object in sharp relief, confuses particulars for universals but thereby renders them in sharp (conceptual) form, but cannot form any clear picture of individuality which is rendered as an indistinct background of necessity. From its predominantly individual perspective, the practical idea can see the individual features of the object in sharp relief, confuses universals for individuals but thereby renders them in sharp (conceptual) form, but cannot form any clear picture of particularity which is rendered as an indistinct background of actuality. Each form of the idea thus sees a certain mixture of conceptuality and objectivity, and the absolute idea is the facility to shift between each of the three perspectives.

So much for the coordinate system. Now just a brief remark on what any of this might have to do with historicity. As a first approximation, the conceptual perspectives – universality, particularity and individuality – can be understood as temporal strata in Koselleck's sense. Particularity is the perspective that registers the short-term, fine-grained surprises, individuality the perspective that registers the medium-term accumulation of repeated experiences, and universality the perspective that registers the long-term persistence of norms and laws that extend across generations, perhaps even to the point of strict universality and necessity.

Of course, this cannot be quite right, given the official prohibition on the appearance of the category of time in the *Science of Logic*. But something very close to this is right. The key is to trade Koselleck's notion of different scales of duration for a closely related notion, namely different scales of variation. The *logical* form of historicity is the field of tension between perspectives of different scales of variation, i.e. between different senses of how much something can change and remain the same thing. Each perspective brings with it its own measure, in Hegel's sense of the term, i.e. its own metric for determining *significant* variation. What one has then in the Idea are three different ways of combining those scales, each of which takes one as predominant. The idea of life starts from the particular perspective and thus foregrounds the fine-grained differences; the idea of cognition starts from the universal perspective and thus foregrounds universal and necessary laws; and the practical idea starts from the individual perspective and foregrounds medium-scale variation: neither universal laws nor particular actions but an agent's character, for example. The absolute idea is the systematic interrelations between these different temporal scales, and the various conceptual and modal features that each makes visible.

But this extraordinary complexity cannot be perceived as an event and thus is, strictly speaking, imperceptible even though it is no way hidden or inaccessible. It is just too big to see, and, in any event, there is no perspective outside of it from which the system can be brought into view all at once. Experience thus requires something simple and mundane, namely space and time. That is, the experience of subjectivity requires precisely the levelling

off that Heidegger too sees as inevitable and Hegel presents in his theory of space and time.[4]

8.2 Nature

In fact, it has always been very difficult to see how the category of time can wait as long as the second part of the system to be introduced. Even though the systematic interconnection of perspectives in Hegel's logic of the concept is in principle synchronic, at the very least we must read it sequentially in time. And even if, as Hegel claims, the logical dialectic goes forwards and backwards at the same time (WL: 12.251, 14–18), *we* still must take up the perspectives one after the other. Furthermore, though we can understand the apparently temporal difference in logical perspectives as being a difference in the scales of variation rather than the scales of duration, spatio-temporal characteristics are never far from our mind as we consider variation itself. Finally, even the characterization of the logical relations as synchronic is, of course, a temporal one. In the same way that projection in perspectival art works as the anticipation of movement, the whole of Hegelian logic is an anticipation of spatio-temporal movement.

But everything hangs on the specific way that time is introduced, and here two textual points are crucial. The first is Hegel's repeated but cryptic description of the transition between logic and nature as the idea's free release from itself of its own particularity (EL§244, Enc17 §192). The second is that Hegel starts from space first and only then moves on to time.

These two points are related, because the first form of that released particularity is space. Why space first (in all editions of the *Encyclopedia* (including the *Propadeutic*))? Why is it the first form of nature, but also 'die abstracte *Allgemeinheit ihres Aussersichseyns*…' (EN'17 §198 (GW13, 116), EN§253). This pure form of externality is not just external to the idea and spirit, Hegel says, but an externality in which the conceptual determinations have 'den Schein eines *gleichgültigen Bestehens* und der *Vereinzelung* gegeneinander…' (EN§247–8).

The reason Hegel starts from space is that this being-outside-each-other is the maximum flattening-out of the logical perspectives and their relationship that still maintains a plurality. The system of logical perspectives is itself too complex to be perceived directly so it must be levelled off in precisely the way that Heidegger suggests. Space is the coordinate system in which one could pick points to represent the three perspectives in the logical idea, but with all of the qualitative differences between the perspectives and their pattern of clarity and blurriness stripped away. This is why Hegel can associate

4 Contra Petry's assertion that among the first things we are 'safe in assuming' about the encyclopedic form is that logic is less complex than nature or the natural sciences (Hegel 2015, 41).

the pure externality of space with mathematical continuity (EN§254): there are points that are, in principle, potential points of view, but there is nothing in the nature of the point to tell us anything about its point of view and how it is related to others. This is the force of Hegel's remark that

> It is inadmissible to speak of *spatial points* as if they constituted the positive element in space, because on account of its lack of difference, space is merely the possibility, not the *positedness* of juxtaposition and the negative, and is therefore strictly continuous.
>
> (EN§254R)

One can see this inadmissibility registered in the pattern of Hegel's presentation, as the flattening is immediately followed by the arising again of qualitative differences, in three condensed stages: first, height, length and width are supplemented by point, line and surface; second, point, line and surface are supplemented by present, future and past; and third, the temporal and spatial figurations are combined in a notion of place. At each step we acquire more of the requisite resources for perceiving perspectivally.

The first step is worth meditating on. Hegel begins with general reference to three spatial dimensions (height, width and depth – though he says these are interchangeable). There must be three, Hegel says, because there are three moments of the concept. Prima facie this argument is very difficult to take seriously. Only the number three seems to be shared between the conceptual perspectives and spatial dimensions, which looks even more tenuous than Heidegger's connection of double negativity. Hegel actually acknowledges how tenuous this connection is, noting how superficially the moments of the concept are presented in the dimensions (EN§255R). The three spatial dimensions themselves are insufficient to represent the moments of the concept in the form of particularities outside of each other, since they provide no secure or stable way to distinguish the locations, as it were, and thus to present the moments as truly different from each other. The conceptual connections between concepts and space only present themselves once we look at the construction of points, lines and surfaces, which follows the three dimensions as a way of introducing the 'qualitative difference' required by the conceptual moments.

One way to understand the nature of the insufficiency of the three dimensions themselves is as the lack of an orientation point. Hegel gestures at this when he says we would like to distinguish height from the others by reference to the center of the earth, but this will not do for space as such. There is no privileged orientation point to pick, so we are not yet in Euclidean space (in the modern mathematical sense of 'Euclidean'). Hegel's move is to see how far we can get by picking any arbitrary point and using that to define not three dimensions but the relation between three basic geometrical elements: point, line and surface (*Fläche*). Though they are in some sense merely quantitative notions, there is a qualitative difference between them

that comes out in the fact that one cannot add up points into a line or lines into a surface, or treat them interchangeably as one can with dimensions.

But notice what is missing in Hegel's treatment of space: the parallel postulate, angles, circles or even distance. What one has instead is the notion of lines radiating from a point and collectively delineating a surface or area. Though he never explicitly uses the image, the natural one is of a cone. Of course, any number of geometrical figures could be constructed in this way, but the cone seems paradigmatic in its distinction between the dimension of height and the two dimensions of the plane of the base, and in the way that the latter two dimensions remain indifferently specified. These features make the cone a more natural model than a circle, which in any event would be inappropriate because merely two-dimensional. The cone is also a basic geometrical model of a perspective, which takes in a two-dimensional surface from a point.

Once one sees this, a natural, if somewhat anachronistic, hypothesis is to say that for Hegel, intuited space has a fundamentally projective rather than Euclidean or even affine geometry. In fact, it is not quite so anachronistic, since historically the theory of projective geometry grew out of thinking about problems of perspective in art; it just took until later in the 19th century to clarify the groundwork of projective geometry and its relation to affine and Euclidean geometry (Felix Klein's *Erlangen* program of 1872). A projective theory of space might be exactly what we ought to expect as the 'abstractly universal' form of logical perspective's expansion of its own particularity, i.e. of the differences between the three distinct kinds of perspectives represented by universality, particularity and individuality.

Euclidean geometry develops within that projective space by means of the application of other concepts, as one sees in Hegel's remarks and lectures. For example, when making the offhand remark that the proposition that the shortest distance between two points is a straight line is analytic, not synthetic (contra Kant), he seems to argue that it is due to basic *conceptual* rather than *spatial* features of lines and distances (EN§256R). Measures are conceptual rather than intuitive for Hegel, and one of the fundamental differences between projective spaces and Euclidean spaces is that Euclidean spaces are metric but projective spaces are not. This fundamentally projective nature of intuited space – or, if you like the claim in Heidegger's language: that space is primordially projective rather than Euclidean – extends to the theory of time that develops out of it.

Now on to the second step: Hegel introduces time as a means of building up the perspectival nature of the point: time is the way that the point is *für sich* as opposed to lines and surfaces, which are the point's relation to space only *an sich* (EN§257). The first obvious but crucial thing to note is that this eliminates the line as a figure of time. However we go on to understand the relation between past, present and future, the natural picture of a line with a point in the middle to represent the present is forbidden to us as an interpretation of Hegel, as is the connection it establishes between time

and the number line. Hegel emphasizes the *conceptual* connection between number and the dimensions of time by claiming that those dimensions are both discrete and continuous. This claim about number is an essential claim of Hegel's philosophy of mathematics, but it is fundamentally a conceptual claim about quantity and measure rather than a claim about the form of intuitive presentation. Furthermore, he writes of three *dimensions* of time rather than either *modes* or *directions* of time: past, present and future are not directions or modes in a one-dimensional order but separate dimensions themselves (EN§259).[5] In fact, Hegel says explicitly that

> There is no *science of time* corresponding to the *science of space*, to *geometry*. The differences of time have not this *indifference* of self-externality which constitutes the immediate determinateness of space, and unlike space they are consequently not capable of figuration (*sie sind daher der Figurationen nicht..fähig*).
>
> (EN§§254R & 259R)

This is all the more striking because Hegel explicitly follows Kant's doctrine of space and time as forms of intuition (EN§258R). Understanding the philosophy of nature as offering us a primarily *projective* rather than *Euclidean* geometry helps provides an interpretation of this otherwise puzzling claim. Though Hegel denies that the intuitive nature of time essentially involves a subjective, mental consciousness over against an object, the claim that intuited space is fundamentally projective rather than Euclidean ties it even closer to the perspectival nature of intuition than does Kant's doctrine. It is looking-outward from a distinct vantage point with that pattern of visibility and obscurity that is characteristic of all views from somewhere specific. To put it in a paradoxically Kantian way: whereas Kant offers us primarily a *formal* intuition, Hegel gives us a *form of* intuition, i.e. a form of externality as it appears to a point of view. Clearly Hegel thinks that past, present and future each present externality in a distinctive way to a distinctive point of view. We will have to come back to this point.

Notice already, however, that this initial flattening out of conceptual historicity into time is motivated by diametrically opposed forces than those Heidegger identifies: it is the attempt to make palpable and localizable the unwieldy conceptual framework of such historicity, rather than an arbitrary extension licensed only by its impoverished content. To put it somewhat paradoxically, there is too much time in logic and not enough in nature. There is a formal connection between the idea and time (and also time and spirit), but that formal connection is the rich perspectival structure of subjectivity rather than simple double negation. Heidegger looks for an essence, as it were, that is equally realized in idea, spirit and time; but the relation

5 Cf. Inwood 1987, 60–1.

is more complex, involving the conditions for the possibility of the manifestation in experience of that perspectival structure. It is too big to see all at once, and so there must be an indefinite number of natural phenomena which bring it into view one aspect at a time.

In fact, this is the heart of the remark to EN§258 (EN'17 §203), in which Hegel engages in his most extended discussion of the relation between time and logic. On the one hand, Hegel says, time is different from logic because the latter has its own organizing principle (the concept) within it, whereas time lacks the ability to present that principle as such and so instead presents ceaseless change. Time is intuited *becoming* (Hegel's technical term for ungoverned transformation), whereas the logical movements are inferences.[6] What they share is the driver of the logical movements, namely the over-extension of each conceptual moment. That over-extension is an overreaching (*Übergreifen*) that attempts to present the whole but can do so only from its specific perspective. Time is the sensible form of these relations of over-extension and therefore shares its pattern. This is the sense in which the concept is the 'power (*Macht*)' of time: time is the intuitive presentation of the inferences set out in the syllogistic structure of logic. These inferences are a structured round of transitions between perspectives. As time, that syllogistic structure is presented by the interrelation of the three dimensions of (past, present and future).[7]

Hegel does not himself provide a figure or concept for that interrelation, except for the concrete forms of natural science itself. But in principle, this structure can be presented as a relation between different temporal strata. The paradox, however, is that the interaction between *Zeitschichten* that constitutes the historical now is rendered sensibly in natural time as the

6 One might think that in EN§259 Hegel intends the reference to becoming in just the opposite way, i.e. to use the logical category to differentiate between the future and the past on the basis of the two directions of becoming: 'The dimensions of time, the *present, future, and past*, are the *becoming* of externality as such and its dissolution into the differences of being as passing over into nothing and nothing as passing over into being.' On this reading, presumably the future is the passing over of being into nothing and the past as nothing passing over into being. There are many problems with this interpretation, however. The first is philosophical: it is not at all clear why the future and the past would be characterized in this way. If anything, one would expect them to be reversed, as the something passes out of the being of the now into the nothing of the past, whereas something passes out of the nothing of the future into the being of the present. The second problem is systematic: being, nothing and becoming are the least determinate concepts in all of Hegel's thought, and they serve primarily as placeholders for relationships made more determinate by richer concepts. The third problem is textual: Hegel immediately goes on to say that the future and the past cannot, as such, be sensibly perceived in nature and must be represented as space. It is hard to see why he would say that if the suggested characterization was accurate, since it seems sufficiently simple to be perceived in nature. I thank Stephen Houlgate for pushing me to address this issue.

7 Hegel actually does something like this in the material compiled by Michelet into the *Zusatz* to EN§259, but it is too rudimentary to be of much use for our purposes.

movement between different nows. This denuding of the qualitative differences between the layers of perspectives thus renders the structure of the present itself opaque. But just as natural science is the progressive discovery of inferentially significant patterns within the spatio-temporal world, it is *ipso facto* a discovery of ways in which nature approximates the *Zeitschichten* that historical experience finally makes explicit. And Hegel does provide a way of cashing out these metaphors of approximation and expression: he says that the temporal dimensions in nature are represented in spatial dimensions. If this is right, then the discovery in nature of the spatial form of these inferential patterns should give us a hint or at least some figures for making sense of the historical patterns. The hint is further clarified by the one way in which Hegel is willing to countenance a philosophical mathematics, namely as a science of the measures of actually existing natural forms. This is just what one would expect once one sees that the pure logical form of historicity is the interaction of different measures, i.e. of different scales of variation.

Two features of Hegel's discussion of organism in the Encyclopedia are relevant for these purposes, both of which are right on the surface of the text but can be easily overlooked.

The first feature is so apparently metaphorical that it is easy to dismiss: Hegel says that what distinguishes organics from physics is that the former is nature become ideal, '*selflike* [selbstische] and *subjective*' (EN§337), and throughout the discussion he repeatedly uses optical models to characterize that subjectivity in terms of the behavior of light. It can easily seem mystical or simply mystifying, but my hypothesis is that Hegel is using these optical models as a way of talking about the physicality of perspective. The way that organisms are optical and reflective is the way that they construct and relate perspectives. Perhaps the most concise statement of the way these features of perspective work together is in EN§351: 'The animal has contingent [*zufällige*] *self-movement* because its subjectivity is, like light, ideality freed from gravity, a free time which, as removed from real externality, *spontaneously determines its place* [sich nach innerem Zufall aus sich selbst zum Orte bestimmt.]' He then immediately moves to try to develop this idea through three aspects of the animal: shape, assimilation and the genus process.

The second feature is clear from the overall structure of the discussion of physics and organics: Hegel is searching for a form of individuality that could count as articulating what a place is in the sense required to give content to the formal intuition of space and time. The point of Hegel's discussion of an organism is to find a model for precisely the interlacing of universal, particular and individual aspects of that spatio-temporal place. So, for example, his specific complaint about plants is not that they are insufficiently independent, but that they are insufficiently articulated. The problem with plants is that all of their parts are just versions of the leaf, he thinks, so that there are, as it were, no incongruent counterparts to give the perspective of the plant a fundamental orientation. That is, the plant has

nothing like left and right hands; all of the leaves are, roughly speaking, congruent. Without that orientation, we cannot secure the phenomenal presentation of perspective which space and time are supposed to provide. But because Hegel has a much more developed conception of logical perspective than does Kant, the issue is more complicated. Kant used incongruent counterparts only to ground our intuitive orientation from a single point of view. But Hegel appears to contemplate *three different kinds of incongruent counterparts* for the *three different logical points of view* that are supposed to receive spatio-temporal presentation in nature.

For Hegel, these different perspectives receive their natural shape in the three basic processes of animals, namely formation (*Gestalt*), assimilation and the species process. In brief, my claim is that formation, assimilation and the species process all represent distinctive spatio-temporal standpoints with their own version of incongruent counterparts.[8]

First, and most schematically, shape represents the individual, assimilation the particular and the species-process the universal perspective. If our hypothesis about the temporality of Hegel's logical perspectives is correct, then we should expect shape to register medium-term durations, assimilation to register short-term durations, and the species-process to register long-term durations. And that is just what we find. For example, shape is determined by function, which means regular changes over the life of the individual (e.g. seasonal changes in number and color of a bird's feathers) (EN§352). In contrast, assimilation tracks the momentary and diverse impingements of bits of the world on the animal and their active relationship towards those particular bits. The fine-grained and momentary nature of the needs and instincts guiding assimilation generates the permanent tendency on the part of natural scientists to reduce the differences between them to quantitative differences, a tendency against which Hegel keeps up a constant battle in the remarks and *Zusätze* of the section on assimilation (e.g. EN§359R). Finally, the very title 'species-process' makes it clear that the object at issue is a long-term process exceeding by orders of temporal magnitude the duration of the individual. The very question Hegel tries to answer in that section is how nature makes possible the registering of such a temporal scale, returning an answer that makes him feel like our contemporary, namely sex and death (EN§367).

Second, one would expect each of the perspectives have a view onto the others, in the way, e.g. that universality can brings particularity and individuality into view by rendering them in universal*ish* ways. We find something of this mutual visibility in the *Philosophy of Nature* as well. For example,

8 This, I think, is the meaning of one of the comments appended by Michelet to §352: 'Since the animal organism is the process of subjectivity, of self-relation in an outer world, the rest of nature is therefore here present for the first time as outward, since the animal preserves itself in this relation with the outer world.'

from the individual perspective of shape the universal species-process looks like reproduction (since that is the aspect of the species-process that gives you more individuals) and the particular assimilation process looks like irritability (i.e. how the stuff to be assimilated affects the individual). These are then registered as generationally existent bodily systems (here, the reproductive and the digestive systems, respectively) (EN§§353 and 369).[9] And from the universal perspective of the species-process, the danger of violent death makes particular parts of the shape of the body, namely teeth and claws, stand out as distinctive (EN§368R). Similarly, it comes to perceive the functional systems of the body in their necessity for the genus through the experience of disease (EN§§371 & 374).

Third, we should expect something like incongruent counterparts that do for the animal what the leaves of the plant were unable to do. Here there is a very complicated system of relations in the text and lectures, but let me say something general and then give a very specific example. The general and very schematic point: for each of the main processes – formation, assimilation and the species-process – it is possible to correlate (a) a specific form of syllogism with (b) a range of spatio-temporal metrics with (c) this set of bodily processes. There is no room to go into detail, but here are the correlations:

1. Hypothetical syllogism – medium scale – formation
2. Disjunctive syllogism – small scale – assimilation
3. Categorical syllogism – large scale – species-process

When put together, these three correlations are like axes which to generate something like a three-dimensional coordinate system with its origin at the place of the animal. On my interpretation, this is when we first get Euclidean space and time in Hegel's *Philosophy of Nature*.

The specific example: in EN§355 Hegel argues that the different functional systems of animal bodies are necessarily related to the shapes of those bodies. Here Hegel delineates three forms of shape that give spatio-temporal orientation: (a) internally functionally differentiated parts of the body (head, thorax, abdomen and limbs); (b) a symmetrical orientation outwards from those parts of the body to the spatio-temporal world in general; and (c) a sexual orientation towards another particular individual.

The internal functional differentiation makes possible proprioception (*Selbstgefühl*), or the perception of animal's own body in space. It makes a point of view perceptible as its own place in space and time, and not as an abstract point but as an embodied subjectivity with a distinctive spatio-temporal orientation (EN§356).

9 For the perspective of assimilation on shape, see EN§365 and for its perspective on the species-process EN§366.

The symmetrical outward orientation is then presented through the process of assimilation. For Hegel, this includes not only the practical relation to nature but also sensory perception of the external world – as *bestimmtes Gefühl* instead of *Selbstgefühl* (EN§357). In both cases but particularly in the practical case, the key relation is that of an object against which the subject is tensed ('*die…gesetzte Negation des Subjects in der Weise eines* Objects, *gegen das jenes gespannt ist…*' (EN§359)). This tension with the object gives us our palpable sense of it, and thus the relevant incongruent counterparts are set not only by the different senses but also by the different instincts and needs that drive practical assimilation.

The sexual orientation allows us to take up a spatio-temporal orientation to that which outlasts us as individuals and even generations, namely the species. Of course, that presentation has certain limitations: the 'asexual life' of the genus is perceived as a bad infinity of sexual partners and generations (EN§370), and the distinction between species is perceived as violent death (EN§368). Sexual difference and the struggle for survival thus represent the incongruent counterparts that give us our orientation to the genus.

In all three cases there is something like incongruent counterparts, but the incongruence is greater and the counterparts less otherwise identical than in Kant's understanding. In Kant's example, *everything* about my hypothetical left and right hand is the same with the exception of its chirality (handedness). But between one animal and its mate, there are many differences other than sex, and sex is itself a difference much more complicated than chirality. But if we can speak somewhat more loosely about 'incongruent counterparts,' in a way that combines their use by both Hegel and Kant, then we can see Hegel's point is directly opposed to Kant's argument of 1768 ('On the First Ground of the Distinction of Regions of Space') for the claim that space is absolute as opposed to relational.[10] For Hegel, space is fundamentally relational, and even the phenomenal presentation of logical relations in something close to Leibniz's sense. It is therefore closer to Kant's arguments in the 1770 *Inaugural Dissertation* and 1783 *Prolegomena* for the claim that space must have a fundamentally intuitive and even mind-dependent form. Hegel's is an argument that space cannot be grasped by concepts alone but requires instead a distinctive kind of perspective (*Anschauung*). But even here one must be careful. This perspective is not primarily sensible for Hegel, nor does it trade on the fundamental difference between a perceiving subject and a world to which it appears. This perspective does necessarily involve a distinctive kind of embodied subjectivity as the price of orientation, and what gives one the spatio-temporal perspective is both the embodiment (incongruent counterparts) and the subjectivity (conceptual perspective).

10 Hegel clearly rejects the absolute/container conception of space and time (EN§258R&Z).

There is a further difference between Kant and Hegel here with respect to argumentative structure. Kant uses the existence of incongruent counterparts as a premise in an argument that is something like an inference to the best explanation: there are incongruent counterparts, and the best explanation for them is either absolute space (1768) or intuitive space (1770, 1783). But Hegel takes himself to have shown already – and as a matter of logic – that anything that could be living, true or good is perspectival. Thus, he has no need of the kind of IBE argument offered by Kant. Instead, the inferential priority is reversed, and incongruent counterparts become conditions of possibility for taking up, in space and time, the perspective that we already knew we had to be able to take up. That logical result functions something like a Kantian idea, giving Hegel the warrant to root around in the natural science of his day to find those incongruent counterparts. In the larger encyclopedic scheme, the Philosophy of Nature is also supposed to show that such incongruent counterparts are, by themselves, insufficient for us to take up that perspective in space and time, and thus that spatio-temporal perspective is parasitic on the kinds of historical perspective presented in the *Philosophy of Spirit*.

This strikes me as the way to answer part of the Heideggerian complaint, raised more recently by Anton Friedrich Koch, that Hegel has no way to distinguish the asymmetry of time between past and future (2010, 70). On the basis of the short discussion of time at the beginning of the *Philosophy of Nature* this complaint is surely correct. In fact, Hegel himself doesn't even refer to them as directions but rather dimensions of time. But that insufficiency is part of a larger argument for the necessity of embodied animals with multiple perspectives defined by shape, assimilation, sex and death. Shape is the perspective that gives us the medium-term temporal scale that essentially defines our extended present. Assimilation is the perspective that gives us the short-term temporal scale that verges onto the past. And sex and death are the perspective that gives us the long-term temporal scale that verges onto the future. But 'verges onto' is obviously unsatisfying, both as an interpretive description and as an actual experience of temporality. Hegel's claim is that such an experience is only possible qua historical subjectivity. This makes the form of Hegel's argument much more similar to Heidegger's and Koch's own view in his *Versuch über Wahrheit und Zeit* (Koch 2006). In fact, Hegel's view is not too thin but perhaps too thick, thicker even than the Heideggerian (with respect to which Koch prefers the argumentative advantages of a stripped-down notion of subjectivity).

But one might think that the Heideggerian objection remains: it is distorting to start with the answer to what time is rather than with the being for whom time is a question. Put another way, one might think that one must first clarify the *subject* of logical thinking before clarifying the nature of its temporality, in the way that *Dasein* is first clarified as the subject of *Being and Time*. Or, put slightly differently: it is important to start from concrete lived experience in one's theorizing about time, rather than starting with an

abstraction which may obscure essential aspects of that experience.[11] Here I want to indicate three different lines of reply, dealing with (1) the level of abstraction; (2) the status of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* as preparation for the *Encyclopedia* and (3) the historicity of the *Logic*. In my view, the real question behind these objections is (1) at what level of abstraction to grasp the subject for whom being is a question, or at what level of abstraction to characterize concrete experience. One way to understand the *Logic* is as building up to a conception of precisely the subject for whom being and time are a question, starting with the basic construction of what it means to have a distinctive perspective on anything at all; then developing the notion of an experienceable spatio-temporal perspective; and finally culminating in a conception of a historical perspective. So at least textually it is of course right that Hegel does not start with the conception of the subject, but the *Phenomenology* and the *Logic* together are aimed at it. I am tempted to say that the rest is details of presentation, but that wouldn't be right. For the conception at which it aims is quite different from Heidegger's. Nonetheless, the specific Heideggerian charge of reversed priority seems defanged. After all, it seems like Heidegger presupposes that it is only humans for whom being is a question, but you might think that an advantage of Hegel's approach is that it shows the different ways that being can be a question – or at least a *problem* – for merely natural creatures as well. Put another way, it is not obvious with what characterization of everyday experience to begin in the order of explanation. It is not clear that tool use (Heidegger) is any more concrete than spatio-temporal intuition (Kant) or the experience of becoming (Hegel). Or, to stick closer to the Heideggerian starting point, it is not clear that tool use is any more everyday or existentially real than moral judgment (Kant) or parenting (Hegel).

If the objection just relates to priority, then it is not clear how powerful it is. After all, certain conceptual resources appropriate to the analysis of *Dasein* have to be brought to bear on that problem before they can be justified by the analysis. We could call these, in Heidegger's case, phenomenological concepts. So the analysis of *Dasein* proceeds against the background of implicit phenomenological resources, whereas the analysis of conceptual subjectivity proceeds against the background of an implicit conception of historical subjectivity. Both thus involve a kind of virtuous circularity. Is there any reason to choose one procedure over the other?

Here (2) the *Phenomenology* comes into play. One might take the *Phenomenology* to provide an argument (a) for the claim that we have *many* different ways of grasping the being for whom being is a question, so that it is not obvious with which conception of that being we should start. And (b) for the claim that all of these conceptions presuppose some perspectival way

11 This objection was put to me in these forms by Mark Wrathall, Sebastian Stein and Morganna Lambeth.

of being at home in (historical) being. Then the *Logic* explores what that could look like. That's why it makes sense to think of the idea as the pure form of a historical object (or an object of historical experience).

And thus (3) we had to have come to our self-consciousness of our historicity before we could explore the conceptual structures that make it possible. Here I just briefly want to turn to Hegel's conception of history as understood through the lens of a historian who found Heidegger's conception of history insufficient, namely Reinhart Koselleck.

8.3 Spirit

Remember that for Koselleck, temporal layers of experience and expectation were sedimented in the historical present which, to use another of Koselleck's metaphors, was best understood as the field of tension between these different temporal layers. My claim is that in Hegel, natural spatio-temporal dimensions combine with the richer logical form, on the one hand, and social institutions, on the other, to generate an actually experienced form of history for mental life (*Geist*). When this happens, the short-term perspective of particularity becomes associated with the past, the medium-term perspective of individuality with the present, and the long-term perspective of universality with a future far enough away that it can equally look like an idealized past (see also EN §259). This is the way Hegel describes reason as the process of spirit in the *Science of Logic*: the particularity of the past is dissolved in the universality of the future but held together in the individuality of the present (WL 21.8).

Let me conclude, then, with the final part of my overall interpretive claim: in the Philosophy of Objective Spirit, modern historicity is constructed through the social form of Hegel's political philosophy. In that philosophy, political society is articulated as a set of interlocking perspectives in tension, each of which has its own temporal metric that generates the perception of past, present and future. The easiest place to see the temporal metrics is in Hegel's theory of the estates [*Stände*]. In this social taxonomy, the backward-looking and conservative agricultural estate is put together with the forward-looking and accelerationist estate of trade and industry through the active mediation of the present-looking and moderationist public estate. Hegel's proposed state raises these estates to visibility by socially coding the different branches of government in a method with deep roots in Montesquieu.[12] The executive branch is the visible, institutional form of the public estate, one house in the legislature is that same kind of form for the estate of trade and industry, and another house the form for the agricultural

12 This is a different logical-social analysis than that offered in Klaus Vieweg's work, which also has a Montesquian form but one tied to the three forms of government rather than temporal orientations (Vieweg 2012).

estate. To use Koselleck's metaphor of a *Spannungsfeld*, the proceedings of the legislature are supposed to open such a field through the tension between acceleration and inertia. In this political phenomenology, as it were, that field is a present of historical experience in which the executive branch can act effectively and publicly. To use just another example, the same sort of tension between perspectives is found in the three institutions of ethical life: the family is the backward-looking, conservative, particularist institution in tension with forward-looking, accelerationist, universalist civil society and the present-looking, moderationist, individual state with its medium-term policy goals. In all three cases, the point for our purposes is that the social form of political life gives us first the *dimensions* of time as something more than mere *directions*. It gives us dramatically different temporal perspectives on matters of common concern, and the tension between those perspectives gives us the historical present.

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9 Hegel's Logic as a System of Illegitimate Totalities

Michela Bordignon[1]

O samba bate outra vez
O toque de reunir
O samba é que leva emoção
Ninguém pode impedir
O samba é que é a revolução
É preciso que se convençam
Por isso hoje o samba saiu
Saiu de novo pra quem não ouviu
E vem do compositor do Brasil
Com sua bênção
O samba bate outra vez
(Maurício Tapajós – Paulo Cesar Pinheiro)[2]

In a line of interpretation of Hegel's thought that is very popular especially in the continental contemporary philosophical debate, Hegel is commonly considered as a philosopher who assumes reason as the totalizing principle encompassing everything there is, suppressing any otherness, difference,

1 I am very grateful to Gregory Moss, Diego Bubbio, Sebastian Stein and Joshua Wretzel for their comments and suggestions.

2 'Samba hits again
The touch of gathering
Samba takes emotion
Nobody can stop
Samba is the revolution
It is necessary to be convinced
So today samba came out
Out again for those who haven't heard
And it comes from the composer from Brazil
With his blessing Samba hits again'

I thank Vitor Beghini for reminding me of this song and for helping me to realize that illegitimate totalities act not only in Hegel's philosophy, but also in Brazilian samba.

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conflict, opposition that constitutes reality as we know it.[3] The aim of the article is to shed light on the limits of this reading: we can surely conceive of Hegel as a philosopher of totality, but this is true if, and only if, we conceive of the notion of totality in an unorthodox way, which opens the space for the most radical and concrete difference and negativity.

In order to do that, I will focus on the first part of Hegel's system and I will divide the text in three parts:

1. I will show that each logical determination of Hegel's logical system, as well as the system as a whole, can be conceived as a totality
2. I will show that the totalities denoted by Hegel's logical determinations could be conceived as illegitimate totalities
3. I will show that Hegel endorses a non-standard approach to such illegitimate totalities and I will shed light on the implications of this approach with respect to his conception of logic and with the conception of reason as a totalizing principle

9.1 Logical Determinations and Totalities

In the introduction of the *Science of Logic*, Hegel claims: 'If logic has not undergone change since Aristotle […] then surely the conclusion to be drawn is that it is all the more in need of a total reworking.'[4] This revolution largely deals with the relation between form and content of logical categories, that is a relation depending on the way Hegel conceives of the task of the logic itself.

The purpose of formal logic is to establish the criteria for determining when arguments are valid and when they are not. These criteria are independent from the content of the propositions included in the arguments and on their relationship to objective reality, that is to say, they are independent from their truth. This is problematic for Hegel:

> The treatment of concepts and of the moments of the concept in general, of the thought determinations as forms that are at first different from the material and are only attached to it – this is a work that quickly gives itself away as being inherently inadequate for the attainment of truth which is the object and purpose of logic. For as mere forms, as

3 For example, Levinas claims what follows: 'The whole of this work aims to show a relation with the Other standing out not only against the logic of the contradiction where the other of A is non-A, negation of A, but also against the dialectical logic where the Same participates dialectically with the Other and reconciles with it in the unity of the system' (Emmanuel Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity. An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 1998), p. 161).

4 G. W. F. Hegel, *Science of Logic* (from now on SL), ed. and trans. G. di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 31.

> distinct from the content, such concepts and their moments are taken in a determination that stamps them as finite and makes them unfit to hold the truth which is in itself infinite.[5]

For Hegel, there is not much wrong with formal logic being concerned with the mere form of the argument. The big problem for him is the ground of this preoccupation that consists in the identification of the object and aim of logic, which is and must be the truth, and not the simple validity of arguments. And actually, Hegel's logical revolution consists in thinking a form of logic whose main concern is the truth.[6] But how should the notion of truth in Hegel's system be conceived? This is a huge question[7] and I will restrict my attention here to the notion of truth of logical determinations.

The first thing we can say is that truth is not to be considered as a property of propositions. The truth bearers in Hegel's logic are thought determinations, which are not only forms of thought, but also forms of being. And if these forms can be said to be 'true,' they are not only formal, but they have content too. However, truth is not a fixed label to be ascribed to the content of a determination according to a determinate criterion, but it is something pertaining to a logical determination itself. Truth does not depend on the relation between a determination and something external to it, but on the content of each single determination: it is the objective, immanent, necessary truth of each determination in itself, and it corresponds to the complete unfolding of its content:

> Usually we call truth the agreement of an object with our representation of it. Thus we have an object as a presupposition, and our representation is supposed to conform to it. - In the philosophical sense, by contrast, truth means in general the agreement of a content with itself.[8]

5 SL, pp. 17–8.

6 This revolution is the result of the tradition of classical German philosophy. For example, Christian Wolff points out the relation between the investigation of the forces of the understanding and the knowledge of truth. See Christian Wolff, *Vernünftige Gedanken von den Kräften des Menschlichen Verstandes und ihrem richtigen Gebrauche in Erkenntnis der Wahrheit*, hrsg. von Hans Werner Arndt (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag 2006), pp. 117–8). On the relation of Hegel's logic with the tradition of classical German philosophy see Brady Bowman, *Hegel and the Metaphysics of Absolute Negativity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013) pp. 62–101; Michela Bordignon, 'Logica,' in Luca Illetterati and Paulo Giuspoli (ed.), *La filosofia classica tedesca: parole chiave* (Roma: Carocci, 2016), pp. 123–46.

7 On the notion of truth in Hegel's thought see Christoph Halbig, *Objektives Denken. Erkenntnistheorie und Philosophy of Mind in Hegels System* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 2002); Giovanna Miolli, *Il pensiero della cosa. Wahrheit hegeliana e identity theory of truth* (Trento: Verifiche, 2016); Gregory Moss, Hegel's *Foundation free Metaphysics, The Logic of Singularity* (New York: Routledge, 2020); Elena Ficara, *The Form of Truth. Hegel's Philosophical Logic* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021).

8 G. W. F. Hegel, *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline Part I: Science of Logic* (from now on EL), ed. and trans. by K. Brinkmann and D.O. Dahlstrom (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), § 24A.

Therefore, truth is not the correspondence of a representation with a state of affairs. Rather, it is the correspondence of a determination with itself, namely with its own content. This relation is not a fixed one, because it consists in the process through which the determination completely discloses its specific shape on the base of its content. The task of the logic is to grasp the form through which the truth of each determination is articulated, which is, at the same time, the concrete content of each determination,[9] and to make explicit how and why each one unfolds this content constituting new determinations that therefore enter into an intrinsic relation and form a systematic whole.

The truth is therefore conceived in terms of completeness. In effect, on the one hand, the truth of a determination is the realization of the complete series of necessary and sufficient conditions in order for it to be what it really is. For example, the truth of being is not limited to the identity of being to itself, but it requires also its vanishing into nothing, because only in the passing over into the opposite determination pure being completely unfolds what its absolute indeterminacy consists in.[10] On the other hand, the truth of the system is the realization of the complete series of the necessary and sufficient determinations for it to be what it really is, that is to say, the whole system of categories able to account for the pure forms of all that is thinkable as well as all there is.[11]

This conception of truth is anticipated in the *Phenomenology*, when Hegel claims that 'the true is the whole.'[12] Similarly and interestingly, in the *Encyclopedia*, Hegel explicitly associates the notion of truth not precisely with the notion of 'wholeness,' but with the notion of totality:

9 'This objective thinking is thus the *content* of pure science. Consequently, far from being formal, […], it is its content which alone has absolute truth, or, if one still wanted to make use of the word "matter," which alone is the veritable matter – a matter for which the form is nothing external, because this matter is rather pure thought and hence the absolute form itself' (SL, p. 29). See Halbig *Objektives Denken*; Luca Illetterati (ed.), *L'oggettività del pensiero. La filosofia di Hegel tra idealismo, anti-idealismo e realismo*, Verifiche, v. 36, n. 1–4 (2007).

10 '*Pure being and pure nothing are therefore the same*. […] But the truth is just as much that they are not without distinction; it is rather that *they are not the same* […], and that *each* immediately *vanishes in its opposite*' (SL, pp. 59–60).

11 'It [absolute idea] is the sole subject matter and content of philosophy. Since it contains *all* determinateness within it, and its essence consists in returning through its self-determination and particularization back to itself, it has various shapes, and the business of philosophy is to recognize it in these' (SL, p. 735). On the relation between absolute idea and the rest of the logical system see Angelica Nuzzo, 'The End of Hegel's Logic: Absolute Idea as Absolute Method,' in David G. Carlson (ed.), *Hegel's Theory of the Subject* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 2005), pp. 187–205.

12 G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* (from now on PhG), transl. and ed. by Terry Pinkard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 13.

> The science of the latter [the idea, or *the absolute*] is essentially a *system*, since the true insofar as it is *concrete* exists only through unfolding itself in itself, collecting and holding itself together in a unity, i.e. as a *totality*.[13]

In these lines, the notion of totality is not in contradiction with the notion of truth as a whole, but – I argue – is a further specification of the idea already expressed in the *Phenomenology*. The conception of truth as totality, is ascribed not only to the system as a whole in itself, but also to each single determination. When Hegel analyzes the relation between the different parts of the system and the *Encyclopedia* as the whole system, he points out that 'a part is not merely a singular moment, but must itself represent a totality in order to be something true.'[14] What exactly does Hegel mean by totality?

First, a totality is not a whole that is simply given and that philosophy needs to make explicit, but it has a procedural nature, which needs to be disclosed and unfolded within the philosophical reflection. When Hegel explains what the logic is about, he affirms that the object of the logic is the *idea*, and that 'the idea is thinking not insofar as the latter is formal, but insofar as it is the self-developing totality of its distinctive determinations and laws, which it gives itself and does not already *have* and find within itself.'[15] Therefore, Hegel is investigating a totality of a conceptual kind that gets progressively determined according to the content of all its categories.

Second, the meaning of totality can be clarified if we relate it to the notion of the absolute. The system as a whole, as well as each determination of the system itself, is a totality insofar as it is meant to define the absolute:

> We find the various stages of the logical idea in the history of philosophy, in the shape of philosophical systems that have successively emerged, each of which has a particular definition of the absolute as its foundation.[16]

> Now this pure being is a *pure abstraction* and thus the *absolutely negative* which, when likewise taken immediately, is *nothing*. I. The second definition of the absolute, namely that it is *nothing*.[17]

And in the remark on the same paragraph, Hegel claims that 'each subsequent meaning […] is therefore to be regarded only as a *more specific determination* and a *truer definition of the absolute*.'[18] In these lines, when Hegel

13 EL, § 14.
14 EL, § 16 R.
15 EL, § 19A.
16 EL, § 86 A2.
17 EL, § 87.
18 EL, § 87 R.

asserts that each determination is a definition of the absolute, he is referring exactly to the notion of 'the whole' or of 'totality' that is inherently related to the notion of truth in logic and, in general, to the entire system.

In Hegel's logic, the notion of the absolute has different meanings.[19] On a very general level, far from being a cosmic unconditioned entity,[20] the Hegelian absolute is all being is according to its pure ontological forms and, at the same time, all it is necessary to think in order to grasp that all being is according to its pure forms.[21] The totality in question, thus, has both an ontological and epistemological value. The aim of the logic is to determine the pure forms of all there is and is thinkable, that is to say, the pure forms of being and thought, which are supposed to be the same.[22]

If each determination is a definition of the absolute, each determination is a pure form that is entailed by what being *logically proves to be*. Therefore, each determination denotes a form that is constitutive of the way the totality of being is structured and has to be thought of. The determination of the finite is the logical form of all there is in so far as all there is, is finite. The determination of identity is a logical form of all there is, insofar as all there is, is identical to itself. The determination of causality is a logical form of all there is insofar as all there is stands in causal relations with other existent things, etc.

19 In this context I will not consider the specific meaning of the logical determination of the absolute in doctrine of essence. On this topic, see Friedrike Schick, 'Reflexion und Absolutes. Ein immanenter Kommentar zur Kategorie, das Absolute' in *Hegels Wissenschaft der Logik*, *Theologie und Philosophie*, v. 69, n. 1 (1994), pp. 90–9; Francesca Michelini, *Sostanza e assoluto. La funzione di Spinoza nella Scienza della logica di Hegel* (Bologna: EDB, 2003), pp. 105–44; Holger Hagen, 'Die Logik der Wirklichkeit: eine Entwicklung vom Absoluten bis zur Wechselwirkung,' in Andreas Arndt e Gunter Kruck, (eds.) *Hegels Lehre vom Wesen* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), pp. 129–58.

20 This is a possible reading of Hegel's texts, which is sustained, for example, in Charles Taylor, *Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p. 104. Yet, I endorse an ontological reading of the logic that does not imply the reference to any sort of unconditioned and unique entity and that follows interpretations such as Stephen Houlgate, *The Opening of Hegel's Logic* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2006); Richard Winfield, *Hegel and the Future of Systematic Philosophy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Moss, 'Hegel's *Foundation free Metaphysics*.'

21 This does now imply the possibility of deducing everything existing from the process of thought self-determination, but the necessity to unfold the pure forms of everything being proves to be from the very thought of being itself. As Marcuse points out, 'the absolute as totality, therefore, is not a sum total; it is not the entirety of all beings. It is what constitutes the proper being of all that is' (Herbert Marcuse, *Hegel's Ontology and the Theory of Historicity* (Cambridge: Mit Press, 1987), p. 82).

22 'The task of the *Logic* is not to predict all the specific contingent changes that will happen to being and to beings but to disclose and understand the general ways or forms of being […] that are logically entailed by, and so inherent in, being as such. It is to discover through pure thought all that being *logically* proves to be' (Houlgate, 'The Opening of Hegel's Logic,' p. 119).

Hence, each determination is a way to define the absolute, that is to say, each determination denotes the totality of all there is according to a determinate form. In this sense, each determination is a totality and, more precisely, it is a determinate form according to which the totality of all there is, is structured.

9.2 Logical Determinations and Illegitimate Totalities

In this second part of the article, my aim is to show that the totalities denoted by the logical determinations of Hegel's system should be considered as *illegitimate* totalities. In what follows I will explain the meaning of the world *illegitimate* and why it can be attributed to the totalities denoted by the logical determinations.

If each logical determination is a definition of the absolute, each determination, as I said, is a way in which all there is, is structured. Interestingly, the content of each determination is, in turn, part of all there is. Therefore, if each determination is a way in which all there is, is defined, the determination has to define itself too. In this way, the content of each determination is a definition of all there is, including itself. This kind of self-reference is at the basis of the way each determination is structured, it is of crucial importance in order to explain why the totalities denoted by logical determinations are illegitimate and what sort of illegitimacy is at stake in Hegel's logical system.

In order to explain why the self-referential character of the logical determinations is problematic and why it implies the illegitimacy of the totalities that they denote, I will refer to the paradoxes of self-reference. The paradoxes of self-reference are defined by Graham Priest as arguments whose structure works as follows: 'there is a totality (of all things expressible, describable, etc.) and an appropriate operation that generates an object that is within and without the totality.'[23] The condition according to which an object is within the totality is called *closure condition*. The condition according to which an object is without the totality is called *transcendence condition*. The operation whose result is an object that transcends the limits of its own totality is an operation of diagonalization.

Actually, what Priest is describing is nothing but a generalization of what Russell already pointed out with respect to the function of self-reference in logical paradoxes:

> In all the above contradictions […] there is a common characteristic, which we may describe as self-reference or reflexiveness. The remark of Epimenides must include itself in its own scope. If *all* classes, provided they are not members of themselves, are members of *w*, this must also apply to *w* […]. In each contradiction something is said about *all* cases

23 Graham Priest, *Beyond the Limits of Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 4.

> of some kind, and from what is said a new case seems to be generated, which both is and is not of the same kind as the cases of which *all* were concerned in what was said.[24]

Russell is referring to non-predicative definitions. Non-predicative definitions are definitions of an object by reference to a totality that this very object is supposed to be a part of. In other words, the *definiens* refers to the *definiendum*. Russell's solution of the problem of non-predicative definitions is to deny the possibility of sets corresponding to the so-called illegitimate totalities.

An illegitimate totality is the set of all the elements that satisfy a determinate condition and it is, at the same time, an element of itself. Or, in other words, a totality is illegitimate when it involves all of a collection that it is itself a part of. The fact that illegitimate totalities may involve contradictions is well known, and a paradigmatic case of an illegitimate totality is Russell's paradox, which involves the set of all sets that do not contain themselves.

The determinations of Hegel's logic, in many cases, are kinds of illegitimate totalities, that is, they are those totalities that are involved in the paradoxes of self-reference. Each determination is like a set, which refers to all there is and it refers to all there is according to a certain form. Therefore, each determination has a content that works as a *definiens*, or as the condition, which defines all there is according to a determinate form. At the same time, the content of each determination is, in turn, something that one can refer to as a unit and therefore it is part of the totality that is meant to be defined. We could say that each determination denotes a set, of which the determination itself is a member.[25]

24 Bertrand Russell, 'Mathematical Logic as Based on the Theory of Types,' in Robert Charles Marsh (ed.), *Logic and Knowledge*: *Essays 1901–1950* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1956), p. 61.

25 I am aware that my use of the notion of sets is problematic. Differently from logical determinations in Hegel's logic, sets are fix logical structures that do not differentiate – or particularize – themselves. However, my focus is the self-referential structure of the sets that are allowed to contain themselves and my reference is not standard set theory, but to not-well-founded set theory. Actually, in his account of Hegel's notion of negation and in order to think of the possibility of self-referential negation, Anton Koch refers, on the one hand, to a non-standard set theory (*non well founded set theory*), and, on the other hand, to the structure of the liar paradox. See Anton Koch, *Die Evolution des logischen Raumes* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), pp. 107–8). Aczel's non-well-founded sets theory replaces the axiom of foundation with the anti-foundation axiom, which allows to account for the existence of sets that are members of themselves and provides a model for dealing with circulars phenomena that are not explicable within a classical theory of sets. See Peter Aczel, *Non-well-founded sets* (Stanford: CSLI, 1988). There is a wide literature on the liar paradox. For a detailed analysis of the relevance of the structure of the liar paradox in explaining the Hegelian concept of negation and contradiction, cf. Michela Bordignon, *Ai limiti della verità. Il problema della contraddizione nella logica di Hegel* (ETS: Pisa, 2015).

In Hegel's logic there are some crucial passages in which the application of the content of a determination to itself implies both that the very content of the determination satisfies the condition on the basis of which it defines the totality that it denotes and, at the same time, it does not satisfy this condition. In other words, the conceptual content of that logical determination is internal to the totality that the determination defines but, at the same time, this very content exceeds the limits of that totality.

These are precisely those cases, which Graham Priest describes as cases that are at the limits of thought.[26] Consider, as an example, the determination of the finite. The finite is a logical determination of the doctrine of being and, as I have said, all determinations are definitions of the absolute, that is, a definition of all there is: all things are finite. To the extent that the content of that determination is also a determinate content, this content is a member of the totality that the determination itself is intended to define. Thus, the logical determination of the finite defines all there is according to a determinate form, including itself.

But what does it mean to say that all there is, is finite and, above all, what does it mean to say that the finite *as such* is finite? The finite, precisely as finite, passes over into its other, namely it has an end, that is to say, it denies itself. The finite, therefore, as finite, that is to say, as part of the totality of the finite things that it is supposed to define, goes beyond the limits of this same totality, because it necessarily passes over into its other, that is the infinite.[27]

To put it differently, on the one hand, precisely the passing over of the finite into its other is what allows the finite to be finite, and then to realize what it is, that is, its finitude. Therefore, because of this passing over, the finite satisfies the condition to belong to the totality, which it is supposed to define and then to be part of this totality. On the other hand, because of this passing over into its other, the finite denies itself and it sublates its own finitude: the finite does not satisfy the condition to belong to the totality that it is supposed to define: insofar as the finite passes over into his other, it ends, it is no longer the finite, but it is its other.

The same occurs with the determination of identity. Like every logical determination, identity is a definition of the absolute, of everything there is, and being part of this totality, it refers to itself too. But what does it mean to assert that identity is identical to itself? In the doctrine of essence, Hegel shows that identity being identical to itself implies its being different from

26 See Priest, '*Beyond the Limits of Thought*.' On the relation between Hegel's dialectic and Priest's dialetheism see Elena Ficara, 'Dialectic and Dialetheism,' History and Philosophy of Logic, v. 34, n. 1 (2013), pp. 35–52; Michela Bordignon, 'Hegel: a Dialetheist? Truth and Contradiction in Hegel's Logic,' Hegel Bulletin, v. 40, n. 2 (2019), pp. 198–214; Moss, 'Hegel's *Foundation free Metaphysics*,' especially pp. 159–88, where the author examines the relation between Priest's enclosure schema and Hegel's dialectic.

27 See SL, pp. 136–7.

its other, namely difference. On the one hand, this being different from its other allows identity to be identical with itself, and thus to be part of the totality that it is supposed to define. On the other hand, because of this same difference from its other, identity turns out to involve difference within itself and then it transcends the limits of the totality that it is supposed to define and to which it belongs. To sum up, we can say that insofar as identity is identical with itself, identity differs from difference and thus it involves difference in itself and transcends the limit of the totality that it is supposed to define and that it is a part of.[28]

In the dialectic of the finite and of identity, as well as in the dialectic of other determinations in Hegel's logic, each logical determination denotes a set of which it is a member, and thus it refers to itself. This implies that the way the content of the determination unfolds itself has a self-referential negative structure on the basis of which this very content turns out to be both internal and external to the totality that it defines. And since the content of the determination defines a totality – all there is and all that is thinkable – according to a certain form, the whole content of this totality turn out to be inside the totality and, at the same time, paradoxically, outside the totality itself.[29]

This 'transcending operation' is nothing more than what Hegel calls 'determinate negation,' which corresponds to the dialectical passage of each determination into its opposite.[30]

9.3 Logical Determination and Non-Standard Approach to Illegitimate Totalities

If this reading of Hegel's logic as a system of illegitimate totalities is correct, the most important problem to face is to understand how Hegel deals with the illegitimacy of the totalities in question.

Hegel endorses an approach to illegitimate totalities that is quite different from that of Russell. Russell, in fact, precisely in order to eliminate the contradiction that these totalities imply, denounces the illegitimacy of this type of totalities through the theory of logical types. Hegel, on the contrary, considers the contradictions implied by the illegitimate totalities of his logic as the structure that defines the totalities in their truth. In other words, Hegel wants to show that the totalities defined by the logical determinations

28 See SL, p. 367.

29 See Marcuse's notion of 'negative totality' in Marcuse, 'Hegel's Ontology,' pp. 68–9.

30 Here I outline general features of the way the negation works on the logic. Yet, each category motivates its own self-contradiction in its own, immanent manner, that is to say, self-negation operates in different manners depending on the conceptual content that gives rise to it. See Karin De Boer, *On Hegel. The Sway of the Negative* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2010); Winfield, '*Hegel and the Future of Systematic Philosophy*,' pp. 20–31; Terje Sparby, *Hegel's Conception of Determinate Negation* (Leiden: Brill, 2015).

are illegitimate only within a certain paradigm of rationality, namely, a paradigm that is not ready to make room for the contradictions that these totalities imply. Therefore, for this paradigm of rationality, the contradictions implied by the totalities of Hegel's logic cannot do anything but mark a limit for this same paradigm.

In this sense, we could see in Hegel a kind of advocate of some types (not all)[31] of illegitimate totalities. He presents various instances of such a defense in his logic, which could be conceived as a system in which it is shown that Russell's verdict on the illegitimacy of such totalities is neither universal nor necessary. In effect, his verdict is based on a specific understanding of logic and, more generally, on a specific understanding of thought, which Hegel would relegate to the paradigm of understanding (*Verstand*). Thus, Hegel's logical system, on the one hand, shows the one-sidedness of the paradigm of thought that denounces the illegitimacy of the totalities in question; on the other hand, this system seeks to show the possibility of a new paradigm of thinking, which leaves open the possibility to overcome the limits of this one-sidedness.

However, there is a sense in which the totalities denoted by the determinations of the logic can be considered to be *illegitimate* by Hegel as well. In fact, each determination is supposed to define a totality, or, differently said, every determination is meant to define all there is according to a determinate form. Nevertheless, on the basis of this totalizing scope, the determination has to refer also to its own content. In doing so, it shows its insufficiency, that is to say, it shows its incapacity to set itself as true totality, because it is a totality that necessarily transcends its own limits. Each determination, or rather, each logical content, is inherently oriented to deny, to exceed its limits and to rearticulate itself in a new configuration of the desired totality.

In § 15 of the *Encyclopedia*, Hegel writes that the logical system is a circle of circles, and if we think of each circle as a totality, Hegel's statement about the nature of these circles becomes intelligible:

> The individual circle, simply because it is in itself a totality, also breaks through the boundary of its element and founds a further sphere.[32]

However, the illegitimacy of the totalities at stake in Hegel's logic does not depend on the violation of criteria external to the content of thought determinations – such as the axiom of foundation, for instance, which guarantees

31 Hegel does not accept just any kind of illegitimate totalities, but only the ones implied by the dialectical process of the unfolding of the determination of the logic. In a similar way, Hegel affirms the truth of some contradictions, rejecting the thesis of the truth of all contradictions. On the relevance of this distinction see Michela Bordignon, 'Dialética e dialeteísmo. Evitar a explosão e enfrentar a exclusão,' in Agemir Bavaresco, José Pinheiro Pertille, Jair Tauchen, Marloren Miranda (eds.), *Leituras da Lógica de Hegel: volume 2* (Editora Fi, Porto Alegre 2018), pp. 233–52.

32 EL, § 15.

that a set cannot be a member of itself. In the Logic, the illegitimacy of the totalities depends on a criterion that is internal to the content of each determination, inasmuch as each determination cannot completely determine the totality that it intends to define. In this sense, defining the totalities denoted by each determination as illegitimate is equal to saying that that they are not the true totality because, as I already noted, truth is defined exactly in terms of concordance of each content with its own internal criteria, namely, of self-correspondence of the content with itself.

In this sense, the negation inherent in each determination, that is, the transcending of its own limits and its turning in a new determination, is defined by Hegel as a determinate negation. This negation has a determinate result, which is not equivalent to the falsity of what is negated. In fact, the determination in which the first one is negated is a new logical content that is opposed to that which generates it, but which is also identical with it insofar as it is the result of its immanent development.[33]

Thus, each step of the dialectical process is the unfolding of the content that, at the beginning of the system, is the absolute immediacy of pure being. The result of the dialectic of being, that is the unity of being and nothing in becoming, can be understood as the most abstract form according to which all there is proves to be in the a priori analysis of thought, that is to say, it is the most abstract structure according to which all there is, is to be defined.[34] In fact, all there is, is becoming and, as Hegel writes, the concrete articulation of being as identity of identity and non-identity is the first and purest definition of the absolute.[35] This totality is the absolute, although it has not yet unfolded all its internal structures, which are developed throughout the whole process of self-determination of thought – and then throughout the whole logic. This first totality is gradually rearticulated in structures that progressively gain a higher level of determinacy, concreteness and complexity, which amounts to a higher level of completeness and thus, to a higher level of 'truth.'[36] Each determination immanently proves to deny itself and

33 For a detailed account on the notion of negation resulting from this reading, see Michela Bordignon, 'L'autoreferenzialità della negazione nella logica hegeliana,' Verifiche, v. 46, n. 2 (2017), pp. 117–37.

34 In the section of *Lectures of the History of Philosophy* dedicated to Greek philosophy, Hegel points out that 'Heraclitus says that everything is becoming, that becoming is the principle. This is contained in the expression 'Being no more is than is non-being. […] It is a great thought to pass over from being to becoming; it is still abstract, but at the same time it is also the first concrete element, that is, the first unity of opposed characteristics. […] hence it is no bygone philosophy that first of all becoming is the truth, or the absolute' (G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy.* Volume II: *Greek Philosophy*, ed. and trans. Robert F. Brown (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, p. 75).

35 See SL, p. 51.

36 'In this sense, just as such an abstract concept would be the first definition of the absolute, so all further determinations and developments would be only more determinate and richer definitions of it' (SL, p. 51–2).

to go beyond its own limits, because it is a totality that is illegitimate. It is not the true totality, given that it is a definition of the absolute that is correct, but it is not the absolute in its completeness, and therefore it is not the absolute truth.[37]

For example, according to Hegel, it is perfectly correct to assert that all there is, is finite, but it is equally correct to assert that all there is, is not finite, because everything there is, is also articulated through dynamics and forms that are more complex than finitude. Thus, we might say that the finite is a good definition of the absolute, but it is not the best definition of the absolute. The fact that all there is, is finite, but also more than finite, is demonstrated by the self-negating dynamics inherent in the finite itself, which is immanently driven to transcend itself as the totality of all there is. Insofar as the finite denies and transcends itself as totality, it shows that finitude is not the totality of truth; or it shows that it is not the totality of all there is. From an epistemological point of view, it can be said that the finite is a necessary, but not sufficient condition to know what the absolute – all there is – is. From an ontological point of view, it can be said that the finite is a constitutive dynamic of the absolute – all there is – but it does not exhaust all the forms in which all there is, is structured. As Hegel would say, the finite is a moment of the process of self-determination of the absolute, but it is not the absolute in its complete process of self-determination.

The true articulation of the totality of all there if, that is to say, the best definition of the absolute, is reached only when thought reaches a totality whose negative self-reference does not imply its transcending itself and its turning into a new totality. The legitimate totality is a totality that can contain itself as its element without implying an overcoming of its limits because there is nothing standing outside this totality. This totality has no limits to be transcended, and thus it is the true totality, that is to say, it is truly absolute.

This totality is denoted by a determination, which defines all there is according to a form which includes all the forms according to which all there is, is determined.[38] In addition, this totality can also include itself. In

37 'The whole thus presents itself as a circle of circles each of which is a necessary moment, so that the system of its distinctive elements makes up the idea in its entirety, which appears equally in each one of them' (EL, § 15).

38 This totality is the absolute idea, which is presented in the last section of the Logic, where Hegel outlines the absolute method. Absolute method is the way truth comes to know itself, i.e. the totality comes to know itself as the true totality. Winfield points out that 'Logic's thinking of thinking concludes itself by simultaneously constituting the totality of logical thought and knowing itself in its complete self-determination. […] If the knowing of truth were not the last element of the true, aspects of the true would be given after true knowledge. […] Accordingly, the Absolute Idea or the consummating totality of determinacy must consist of the self-knowing of that totality' (Winfield, '*Hegel and the Future of Systematic Philosophy*,' pp. 97–8).

this way, the determination denoting the true totality covers all the logical and ontological space of determinability of all there is. There is no logical space outside this totality for determining all there is in a way which is different from the one determined by this totality, just as there is no ontological space outside this totality in which it is possible for all there is to be determined in a way which is different from the one determined by this totality.

According to Hegel, the true totality it is a totality that is absolute in the Latin sense of the word *ab-solutus*. It is *ab-solute* because it is *un-bounded*, that is to say, there is not on any other that lies outside itself that can affect and on which it would be dependent.[39] Such totality is characterized only by relations of internal dependence to itself, because it contains in itself all the different forms through which it determined itself, including the ones necessarily implied by being proving to be and to be thought also as otherness, difference, opposition, contradiction, etc.

This is why the readings of Hegel's thought as a philosophy of a totalizing reason are necessarily limited, one-sided, and they run the risk of losing the specific and revolutionary trait of Hegel's philosophical project. In fact, the basic idea of these readings is that the Hegelian totalizing reason is meant to suppress and dissolve any sort of otherness and difference. What happens with the totality of pure thought disclosed at the end of the logic is quite the contrary. The totality in its truth is one that manages to realize itself in its radical otherness because it includes in itself its other and it feeds itself of this internal relation to this other. Without otherness, difference, opposition and even contradiction, the Hegelian totality is simple and pure indeterminacy and, as we can see at the beginning of the system in the dialectic of being and nothing, it is a totality that immediately undermines itself.

In Hegel's logic, the true totality is gained at the end of the system with the absolute idea, which grounds and contains within itself the entire development of all the logical determinations.[40] The absolute idea, therefore, per-

39 The absolute cannot be in a relation of difference, diversity, conflict, opposition or contradiction to something else because, insofar as it is absolute, it must contain each kind of difference, diversity, conflict, opposition or contradiction in itself. Chiereghin states that contradiction is the immanent law of the absolute, but not the law of the law of the absolute itself (See Franco Chiereghin, 'Incontraddittorietà e contraddizione in Hegel,' in *Il problema della contraddizione*, Verifiche, v. 10, n. 1–3, 1981, p. 258).

40 Absolute idea's being the legitimate totality, the true absolute, the truth that knows itself as truth, seems to be incompatible with the fact that it transcends itself in its otherness, that it '*resolves to release* freely *from itself* the moment of its particularity or the first determining and otherness, the *immediate idea,* as its *reflection* [*Widerschein*], itself as *nature*' (EL, § 244), which is defined also as the 'unresolved contradiction' (EL, § 248R). Nevertheless, absolute idea is the totality of the dimension of self-thinking thought and, even if it exteriorizes itself in nature, this exteriorization is dependent on anything but the logic itself. As Winfield points out: 'logic completes itself as a discrete domain only insofar as it equally

fectly embodies the self-negative dynamics in which the whole system is structured. Considering this, it is no coincidence that the topic at stake in the final chapter of the logic is the dialectical method and its constitutive self-negative dynamic.

The totality disclosed at the end of the logic is what Hegel has in mind in the *Phenomenology* when he claims that the true is the whole. However, the *Phenomenology* is a critical investigation that shows why all the efforts of consciousness to determine the truth of a given object ultimately undermine the basis of its own epistemological claims. On the contrary, the Logic is a positive inquiry in which a new conception of truth is conceived: truth is defined as completeness and completeness consists in the whole process of self-determination of the pure forms of everything being proves logically to be, that is, of the pure forms of all there is. The starting point is the most abstract and immediate form in which all there is, is determined, namely being. The process of self-determination of the pure form of all there is gradually reaches more definite, more concrete and complete configurations, until the totality is conceived as a true totality, that is to say, as absolute idea.

Then, as was anticipated, in Hegel's logic, truth is not conceived according to the standard correspondence view. In Hegel's logic there is no rational agent external to the process of thought's self-determination attributing truth or falsity to what is being presented in the process itself. There is not a rational agent ascribing truth to logical determinations on the basis of external criteria (correspondence, coherence, etc.). The object of speculative logic, in fact, is not so much the truth of knowledge, but the knowledge of truth, that amounts to the self-articulation of thought, which thinks of itself as the totality of what being proves logically to be. What is taking place in the logic is a development of the form of thought, gradually articulating its content according to its own internal criteria.

The illegitimacy of the totalities denoted by logical determinations, and thus the self-referential character of speculative thinking, far from being that which encloses thought within itself, acts on the content of each

generates the boundary that must be crossed to arrive at what lies beyond self-thinking thought. This cannot occur thanks to anything external to logic, for appeal to anything independently given would reinstate the same foundational knowing, the same entrapment in the opposition of consciousness, whose overcoming provides the gateway to logic and philosophy at once' (Winfield, '*Hegel and the Future of Systematic Philosophy*,' p. 98). Of course one could distinguish between the true logical totality and the true totality including also the non-logical totalities of nature and spirit, that are disclosed only with the complete dialectical development of the system. Nevertheless, as Nuzzo points out, logic is 'the speculative science laying the foundations of the philosophical system and leading on to a *Realphilosophie*' (Nuzzo, 'The End of Hegel's Logic,' p. 187). On this topic, see also Diego Paolo Bubbio, 'Hegel, From the I to the Spirit,' *Epoché,* v. 24, n. 1 (2019), pp. 115–32.

determination, allowing the same content to develop in new and more concrete forms. Franco Chiereghin writes:

> Self-reference shows to obey to a logic of totalization that, far from blocking the movement of thought, each time reopens it. […] When a particular determination of thought advances to the point where its path is forced to return back to itself in its own self-reference, it seems to achieve the maximum of circular closure in itself, presenting itself as a self-contained whole. […] In fact, through this self-affirmation, the determination transforms itself and its constituents in such a way that [...] not in spite of its presenting itself as a whole, but precisely thanks to the attainment of self-reflective totality, it is possible for it to proceed to further determinations of thought.[41]

Thus, the illegitimacy of the totalities denoted by each determination, namely the fact that the content of each determination is both inside and outside the totality which it is supposed to define and its consequent self-contradictory structure, does not undermine the basis of the consistency of Hegel's discourse. On the contrary, this illegitimacy and the self-contradictory structure that it implies *is* the logical structure that stands at the basis of the process by which the initial totality is determined in the course of the whole system. Thus, far from being classically defined as what is necessarily false, the contradiction implied by the illegitimate totalities of Hegel's logic is – in a relevant sense – radically true.[42]

This does not imply that, in Hegel's logical system, every contradiction is true. Hegel's thesis could be regarded as a very specific sort of dialetheism, which is the thesis that some contradictions are true. And Hegel suggests, I think, that the true contradictions are the ones implied by the process of self-determination of thought, which is the subject and object of the dialectical process.

In this sense, Hegel's solution for the paradoxical structures generated throughout the dialectical process is not reducible to the classical solution of paradoxes – which consists in an attempt to show that the paradox is only apparent, that is to say, that the contradictory conclusion of the paradoxes does not really follow from the premises. Hegel's solution of paradoxical structures actually consists in the recognition of the objectivity and truth of the contradictory logical structures generated by the self-referential character of negation. Learning to appropriately conceive of the truth of such paradoxical structures, which represent the backbone of Hegel's logic,

41 Franco Chiereghin, *Rileggere la* Scienza della logica *di Hegel* (Roma: Carocci, 2011), p. 42.

42 'All things are in themselves contradictory,' in the sense, moreover, that as contrasted with the other this proposition expresses rather the truth and the essence of things (SL, p. 381).

means learning to conceive of a thought that is capable of overcoming its own limits.

The limits that Hegel's thought attempts to overcome are the limits of representational thought, which is the thought that conceives truth as correctness, as *Richtigkeit*, that is, as a property of propositions and beliefs that must correspond to a given reality. What is beyond the limits of this thought is another kind of thought, which we could call absolute thought, because it is a thought whose purpose is to bring to light the pure logical form of all there is, including itself.

Far from being a thought that needs to conform to a given reality, speculative thought is a totality that has to conform to itself, that is, it has to conform to its own completeness. This attempt to conform to its own completeness is nothing but the process by which each logical determination is intrinsically oriented to articulate itself in the paradoxical transcending of itself as totality, since it does not meet the criteria to be the totality that it is supposed to be. In its negative self-referentiality, each determination is transcended as totality, that is, it goes beyond its own limits. This necessary self-transcendence of every logical determination means one simple fact: each determination is a definition of the absolute, of all there is, but all there is, is not structured simply according to this determination. This is shown by the determination implying further developments, that is to say, by the fact that it implies the dialectical passage in another determination that is more complex, more concrete, and more complete than the one that generates it.

Hegel's aim is – as Nuzzo writes – 'to set the logical form in motion, to show its internal movement or the process through which logical form in acquiring its adequate reality becomes the logical form of truth.'[43] In this sense, far from reducing all there is in the dimension of an abstract and totalizing thought, Hegel discloses a conception of rationality able to transcend his ossified structured and to grasp difference, opposition, contradiction and negativity as constitutive dynamics not only of being, but also of thought itself.

43 Angelica Nuzzo, *''…As if Truth were a Coin!' Hegel's* Developmental Theory of Truth,' Hegel-Studien, v. 44 (2009), p. 146.

10 Nature's Otherness

On the Status of Nature in Hegel's Encyclopedic System

Johannes-Georg Schülein

Otherness, for Hegel, is nature's distinguishing mark. Understanding what exactly he means when he speaks of the otherness of nature is crucial for a proper assessment of his philosophical project. The aim of this paper is to clarify the meaning and philosophical significance of nature's otherness in Hegel's most comprehensive text, the *Encyclopedia*. The first three sections of the paper identify and analyze three claims that function as cornerstones of Hegel's main argument about the status of nature in his system:

(1) *Nature as the other to subjectivity*. With this point, Hegel tries to capture how we initially conceive of nature as something distinct from us. Yet this otherness does not persist. Hegel argues that we appropriate nature in our epistemic and practical approaches to the world.
(2) *Nature as the idea in the form of otherness*. This is the core claim of the second part of the *Encyclopedia*, the *Philosophy of Nature*. Here Hegel first claims that nature is grounded in what he regards as the basis of the rational world, the idea. He then goes on to claim that the idea exists in an imperfect form in nature: in the form of otherness. This imperfection is overcome in spirit.
(3) *The vanishing of nature in spirit*. This claim from the opening paragraphs of the third part of the *Encyclopedia*, the *Philosophy of Spirit*, is Hegel's most controversial and potentially misleading. It seems to suggest that nature ceases to exist at the level of spirit.

These three claims align to form a philosophical dramaturgy in which nature at first seems present but ultimately gives way to spirit and dissolves. This dramaturgy is well-suited to the type of bold idealism with which Hegel is traditionally associated.[1] Ever since Schelling's, Feuerbach's and Marx's critiques, Hegel's thought has been confronted with the protest that nature

1 The most notable proponent of such a view is Charles Taylor (*Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1975), pp. 76ff), who reads Hegel's idealism as the metaphysical view that the world depends on an all-encompassing 'self-positing' 'cosmic' spirit.

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as such plays little if any role in his idealism. In the *Paris Manuscripts*, for instance, the young Marx uses powerful words to express his objection: '*nature as nature*' in Hegel is '*nothing* – a nothing *proving itself to be nothing* – it is *devoid of sense*, has only the sense of being an externality which has to be annulled [*aufgehoben*],' i.e. gets so appropriated by spirit that its externality appears 'a mistake, a defect, which ought not to be.'[2] This sentiment captures Hegel's dramatic framing of the philosophical status of nature mentioned above. Indeed, the term 'otherness' does seem to indicate a certain deficiency of the natural with respect to the spiritual. Moreover, some of Hegel's statements, such as when he refers to a 'vanishing of nature,' sound as if nature in the end is indeed reduced to nothing. Yet from the perspective of the Hegelian system as a whole, nature is clearly not nothing for Hegel: it is real. Moreover, it plays a much greater role in his thinking than some of his own statements might seem to suggest.

To help us make better sense of how to understand the role nature plays in his system, I therefore propose that we read the otherness of nature in Hegel as an index of disunion. There is otherness so long as there is an opposition between us and nature or a gap between concept and reality. Notably, according to Hegel, the gap between concept and reality is itself constitutive of nature. This gap thus not only marks a deficiency but also pertains ontologically to the being of nature. When Hegel further asserts that this gap and the opposition between us and nature can be overcome in spirit, the overcoming he has in mind does not amount to an annihilation of nature. It is true that spirit is by definition completely self-determining and in this sense independent of nature. However, in most of the forms in which spirit actually exists it still encounters nature as something opposed with which it needs to engage. We therefore should not think of Hegel's *Philosophy of Spirit* as describing a sphere that was purified of nature from the outset. To demonstrate why, in the fourth and concluding section of this paper, I present a case study on

(4) *the presence and resistance of nature in spirit*. I will highlight how nature remains present in Hegel's text, even on the plane of absolute spirit. Moreover, Hegel's considerations in the *Anthropology* suggest that the natural may even resist spirit.

Since the status of nature is being reevaluated in current debates on Hegel, many readers today may agree with the assumption that nature plays a greater role in Hegel's philosophy than traditionally has been assumed, as

2 Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, *Collected Works vol. 3: Marx and Engels 1843–1844* (New York City: International Publishers, 1975), p. 346.

well as with the observation that nature is still *present* in spirit.[3] Yet, I argue that nature is not only present but can also *resist* spirit – and this point has far-reaching implications that have yet to be discussed.[4]

10.1 Nature as the Other to Subjectivity

In a '*Zusatz*' that precedes the first paragraph of the *Philosophy of Nature* in the *Encyclopedia*, Hegel introduces nature as a 'problem' and 'riddle' that remains unsolved.[5] Nature is a riddle and a problem precisely because it appears to us at first as an 'alien existence,'[6] as an other vis-à-vis our subjectivity. The task that Hegel sets for his philosophy is to offer a solution. He does so by reducing this otherness.[7]

Hegel describes the problem of nature in this way: as self-conscious subjects, we tend at first to experience and conceive of nature as something opposed and foreign to us. We are not nature, and nature is not us. It may even look to us as if we are enclosed in our own self-consciousnesses while nature exists as a world outside of us. Even if we do not push this to a solipsistic extreme, nature poses a riddle for us, because, as Hegel laconically puts it, 'we do not understand it.'[8] Yet, at the same time, he emphasizes that

3 Robert Pippin holds for instance that spirit 'is not non-nature or immaterial, but, in Hegel's constant phrase, the negation of nature,' viz. is a way of practically engaging with the natural, as I will also argue (*Hegel's Practical Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2008), p. 57). For more recent interpretations that move in this direction, see Sebastian Rand, 'Hegel's *Philosophy of Nature*,' in *The Oxford Handbook of Hegel* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2017), pp. 384–406, Thomas Khurana, *Das Leben der Freiheit* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2017), and Alison Stone, *Petrified Intelligence: Nature in Hegel's Philosophy* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2004).

4 Wes Furlotte makes a similar claim when he argues that the natural 'functions as a disruptive element within the processes constitutive of spirit's freedom' (*The Problem of Nature in Hegel's Final System* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2018), p. 82). I agree with this claim, but I have some hesitations about how Furlotte interprets the natural from a Freudian angle (with a certain preference for taking points to the extreme). For details, see my review of Furlotte's book in *Hegel-Studien* 53/54 (2020), p. 355–60.

5 G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature. Part Two of Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences (1830)*, transl. by A.V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1970), Zusatz, p. 3. Now that the historical-critical edition of Hegel's lectures on the philosophy of nature has appeared in the *Gesammelte Werke* (vols. 24,1–3), we can confirm that he introduced nature as a problem or riddle in many of his lectures over the years. In this paper, I will use and translate quotations from these newly edited lectures. My quotations from Hegel's *Philosophy of Nature* (Miller), *Logic* (Brinkmann/Dahlstrom), and *Philosophy of Spirit* (Wallace/Miller) harmonize the various translations. For 'Geist' I use 'spirit' (not 'mind'), for 'Begriff' 'concept' (not 'notion').

6 Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, Zusatz, p. 3.

7 Hegel was already employing this programmatic idea about nature in his early drafts dating to the Jena period (between 1801–3). See my reconstruction in 'Das Absolute, das Leben und das Bedürfnis der Philosophie' in *Subjekt und Person* (Hamburg: Meiner, 2019).

8 G. W. F. Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke vol. 24,1: Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Natur I. Nachschrift Uexküll 1821/22* (Hamburg: Meiner, 2012), p. 195: 'Wir sagen nun also, die Natur sei räthselhaft für den Geist, wir verstehen sie nicht.'

we as human beings depend on nature to satisfy our material needs. We must eat, drink and use the materials we find around us for our manifold purposes. Because of this dependency, we continuously must interact with the natural world that we find opposed to us and which we do not immediately understand. The solution Hegel proposes to this problem is meant to overcome this opposition in a profound way.

To set up for his core argument, Hegel cites two ways in which we already bridge the gap between ourselves and the natural sphere in our daily practices and common forms of knowing objects. Firstly, since we depend on nature, we constantly make use of natural objects, and as we use them, we appropriate them. We make nature our own. The natural world loses its independence as we employ natural objects as means for our ends. Accordingly, the purpose of such objects

> lies in us, not in them, they fulfill it only insofar as they are used, destroyed, they are worn down, consumed, their own identity more or less ceases to exist, which can happen over a longer or a shorter period of time. Their annihilation is the end.[9]

In this instrumentalist logic, the apples we eat and the oil we frack do not have their purpose in themselves. Moreover, as we use the apples and the oil, they ultimately cease to exist. Hegel is clear that in our '*practical* approach to Nature, the latter is, for [us], something immediate and external,' and we are right to regard ourselves 'as *end*.'[10] He furthermore affirms that the instrumental usage of nature contains the 'correct presupposition that nature does not itself contain the absolute, final end.'[11] However, 'the end-relationship demands for itself a deeper mode of treatment than that appropriate to external and finite relationships.'[12] This deeper mode of treatment, which is distinct from an instrumentalist logic, addresses *the concept* 'immanent in nature as such.'[13]

Secondly, as we encounter nature as an other that we initially do not understand, we nevertheless strive for an understanding of it. This is the task or even the 'drive of cognition,' as Hegel puts it. In the attempt to know an object, we strive to 'appropriate and penetrate it' conceptually 'such that it does not belong to itself anymore but to us and its content and essence to

9 Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke vol. 24,1: Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Natur I. Nachschrift Griesheim 1823/24*, p. 478–9: '[I]hre Bestimmung liegt in uns, nicht in ihnen, sie erfüllen sie nur in so fern sie gebraucht, vernichtet werden, sie werden abgenutzt, aufgerieben, ihre Eigenthümlichkeit geht mehr oder weniger unter, was auf längere oder kürzere Zeit, hinausgeschoben sein kann. Ihre Vernichtung ist das Letzte.'

10 Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, §245, p. 4.

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid., p. 4–5.

13 Ibid., p. 5.

our conceptual representation [*Vorstellung*].'[14] Our attempts to represent natural objects aim beyond the merely sensible to try to gain a conceptual grasp of what those objects truly are: 'nature presents us at first with an abundance of singularities and transformations,' but we 'want to find what is universal and permanent in it.'[15] This cognitive endeavor is only possible if nature is not actually the opposing other that it initially appeared. There must be some relation between me and nature that allows for a cognition of the universal. In this sense Hegel assumes that 'the inner essence of nature is […] indeed nothing but the universal' and 'the universal is our own element, the universal are thoughts. […] Thinking is nothing else but apprehending any content in its universality.'[16] If this is true, natural objects are not as foreign and other to us as they initially seem. Universality essentially connects them with us. Since universality is the sphere in which rational thinking operates, Hegel can go as far as saying that the 'essence of nature is reason.'[17]

In fact, Hegel ultimately has a specific form of reason and universality in mind. He views the empirical approach to gaining knowledge about certain natural objects – or about certain areas of nature in the sciences – as valid but limited. He emphasizes that the philosophical consideration of nature must 'be in agreement with our empirical knowledge of Nature,' it 'presupposes and is conditioned by empirical physics.'[18] However, our empirical understanding is tied to our finite subjectivity and therefore is contingent; it 'fragments and tears the living unity' that nature actually is 'apart.'[19] The goal of Hegel's philosophy of nature is to move beyond such finite subjectivity and fragmented understanding to grasp what nature in its totality truly is. Accordingly, Hegel's claim that the essence of nature is reason pertains to the natural world in its entirety. The form of rationality that permeates nature as a whole is what he calls *the concept*.

We can thus summarize that the initial otherness of nature in relation to our subjectivity does not persist for Hegel. As we interact with nature, practically and epistemically, we appropriate it. Moreover, as we prove our ability to successfully appropriate it, we prove that nature does not resist us

14 Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke vol. 24,1: Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Natur I. Nachschrift Ringier 1819/20*, p. 5: 'Das Erkennen geht aber darauf […] den Gegenstand dem Geist eigen zu machen zu durchdringen daß er nicht mehr sein eignes sondern das unsre sei so daß also sein Inhalt und Wesen auch unsrer Vorstellung angehören.'

15 Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke vol. 24,1: Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Natur I. Nachschrift Uexküll,* p. 196.

16 Ibid.

17 Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke 24,1: Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Natur I. Nachschrift Ringier 1821/22*, p. 8.

18 Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, §246 rem., p. 6.

19 Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke vol. 24,1: Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Natur I. Nachschrift Uexküll,* p. 191.

in principle. Hegel argues that nature in truth is not the radical other it first appears, because its inner essence is universal and the universal is the very element of our thinking. At this point, we might still not think that Hegel appreciates the natural as something with intrinsic value. Rather, he seems to reduce it to the conceptual. However, it is worth remembering that for Hegel the universal consists not in generic concepts but ultimately in what he calls *the idea*. In Hegel's account, nature *is* the idea but *in the form of otherness* – and the otherness of the idea bears consequences for the status of nature.

10.2 Nature as the Idea in the Form of Otherness

Hegel's basic definition of nature in the *Encyclopedia* refers to it as 'the idea in the form of *otherness*.'[20] It is important to pay close attention to Hegel's use of the term 'otherness' here. He does not speak of nature as *the other* of the idea (or anything else).[21] He underlines that 'nature is not merely external to this idea (and to its subjective existence spirit).'[22] By definition, nature is thus not radically separate from the idea (or from spirit). Rather, when Hegel calls nature the idea *in the form of otherness*, he claims that

(a) nature *is* the idea, but
(b) the idea in nature is *not completely one with itself*

He explains the latter point by clarifying that 'the idea is the negative of itself, or is *external* to *itself*' and that '*externality* constitutes the specific character in which nature, as nature, exists.'[23] In this sense 'otherness' functions as both a negative and positive term: as it denotes the non-identity of the idea in nature, it is negative and marks a deficit; but since it simultaneously refers to the non-identity constitutive of what nature truly is, it is also positive. We can therefore say that, for Hegel, the being of nature is the non-identity of the idea. The decisive question is of course in what this non-identity of the idea consists.

20 Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, §247, p. 13. At the end of the *Logic*, Hegel famously declares that the logical idea 'resolves to release freely from itself' into nature (G. W. F. Hegel, *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline. Part 1: Science of Logic,* transl. by K. Brinkmann and Daniel Dahlstrom (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2010), §244, p. 303). I will not comment on the widely debated transition from logic to nature. For a discussion c.f. the recent paper by Ermylos Plevrakis, 'Übergang von der Logik in die Natur aus absoluter Freiheit?,' *Hegel-Studien* 52 (2017), pp. 103–38.

21 Sometimes Hegel refers to nature as the other of the idea in his lectures. This is, in my view, is an imprecise use of language owing to the spontaneity of his oral presentations.

22 Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, §247, p. 13.

23 Ibid., p. 14.

Broadly speaking, 'the idea' is what Hegel regards as the foundation of the rational world. He defines the idea in the *Encyclopedia Logic* as '*the absolute unity of the concept and objectivity*' and, as such, as 'the true *in and for itself*.'[24] Hence, the truth that comes with the idea requires a certain identicality between the conceptual determination of the world and what is objectively true. Hegel explains that the idea has an 'ideal content' that is 'none other than the concept in its determinations.'[25] It moreover has a 'real content' that consists 'only in its exhibition [*Darstellung*], an exhibition that it [the concept] provides for itself in the form of external existence [*Dasein*].'[26] According to this description, an ideal conceptual content must be fully manifest in the real world for the truth of the idea to exist. If such a manifestation occurs, the real world is itself ideal, 'incorporated into the concept's ideality and in its power' such that the conceptual side of the idea 'preserves itself in that exhibition.'[27] A reality is thus ideal when its conceptual determinations are fully present. What this reality truly is and what concepts hold about it is one. Hence, what Hegel calls 'the idea' is not distinct from the world. Rather, it names a state in which the conceptual determinations of reality are fully actualized. Hegel's idealism in this sense presents itself as a form of realism.

From this position, it follows that, if the being of nature consists in the non-identity of the idea, nature must somehow lack the absolute unity between concept and objective reality. There must be a gap between the conceptual determination of nature and how this determination manifests. In this sense, the leading argument of the *Philosophy of Nature* in the *Encyclopedia* is that the idea exists throughout the natural world 'in a disparity with its own self'[28] and is unable to fully overcome this disparity. Characteristic of this disparity is 'the *unresolved contradiction*' that the idea defines the universal constitution of nature but does not manifest in an adequate form. Hegel explains this gap first (i) as a conflict between necessity and contingency and secondly (ii) in terms of a lack of an essential feature of the idea: nature has no freedom.

(i) As Hegel sees it, nature on the one hand displays a certain '*necessity* of its forms which is generated by the concept' as well as a 'rational determination' of these forms 'in the organic totality'[29] that constitutes the natural sphere as a whole. On the other hand, however, nature also displays

24 Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic,* §213, p. 282.
25 Ibid.
26 Ibid., p. 282–3.
27 Ibid., p. 283.
28 Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, §246 rem., p. 17.
29 Ibid., §250, p. 22.

a certain 'indifferent *contingency* and indeterminable irregularity.'[30] To illustrate this latter point, Hegel turns to concrete natural entities where 'contingency is at its greatest.'[31] Nature, according to Hegel, 'everywhere blurs the essential limits of species and genera by intermediate and defective forms,' such as 'monstrous births.'[32] These 'defective forms' do not fully actualize all of the properties of the genus to which they belong. Yet, we can only identify them as 'defective' if we 'presuppose a fixed, invariable type'[33] that does not empirically exist. We thus have to embrace 'the self-subsistence and dignity of the determination stemming from the concept.'[34]

Hegel compares this view to that of 'the ancients,' who thought of 'matter as the *non-ens*,' and also to what Schelling has called the '*Abfall*' of nature, or 'the *self-degradation* of the idea.'[35] Yet, Hegel does not try to make a case for acosmism: to think of nature as 'non-being' for Hegel by no means implies a denial of the existence of the natural world. His discussion of a 'non-being of nature' instead is meant to mark the gap between the essential conceptual constitution of the natural world and the contingent actualizations of it found in the empirical sphere. For what we encounter in the empirical sphere does not reveal the truth of nature and, relative to the conceptual, is not what really defines nature's being. Hegel sounds like a Platonist or Schellingian when he writes: '*In itself*, in the idea, nature is divine. But as it *is*, the being of nature does not accord with its concept.'[36] The persistence of this non-identity for Hegel proves the '*impotence* of nature,'[37] the inability to resolve its contradictory character. However, more than Schelling and Plato, Hegel accepts this impotence and willingly concedes that in nature contingency 'has its right.'[38]

Understanding nature in Hegel's sense certainly means grasping what is universal in it. However, the contingency governing natural entities 'sets limits to philosophy,'[39] especially since we cannot expect to fully account

30 Ibid.
31 Ibid., p. 23.
32 Ibid., §250 rem., p. 24.
33 Ibid.
34 Ibid.
35 Ibid. §248 rem., p. 17. Stone translates 'Abfall' as 'rubbish' in her seminal book on Hegel's philosophy of nature. This translation is misleading, since Hegel does not think of nature as 'trash,' as it were, but rather refers to the term that Schelling uses to indicate the ontological gap between singular entities and the absolute (c.f. Stone, *Petrified Intelligence*, p. xiii). A better translation is 'falling-away from absoluteness' (c.f. F. W. J. Schelling, *Philosophy and Religion (1804)*, transl. by K. Ottmann (Putnam Conn.: Spring Publications, 2010), p. 26.).
36 Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, §248 rem., p. 17.
37 Ibid., §250, p. 23.
38 Ibid. See Henrich's seminal essay on contingency in Hegel: 'Hegels Theorie über den Zufall,' in Hegel im Kontext (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1971), p. 157–86.
39 Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, §250 rem., p. 23.

for all contingent occurrences. What we can and must do, however, is acknowledge contingency. Since Hegel conceives of nature in terms of the non-identity of the idea, he does not focus simply on what is universal or generic in nature. He instead tries to account for *a universal that does not fully manifest*. As Hegel describes it, this imperfect manifestation of the universal *is part of the idea* in nature. It is precisely for this reason that the idea is not one with itself. The non-identity of the idea indexes the contingent as that which cannot be reduced to conceptual universality. Because of this gap marked by contingency, we cannot understand Hegel as simply reducing the natural to the conceptual.

(ii) The otherness in which the idea exists in nature for Hegel moreover means that 'nature exhibits no freedom in its existence.'[40] Since freedom belongs essentially to the idea, nature does not fully manifest what the idea truly is.

Understanding this claim requires a closer look at the details of Hegel's conception of the idea. In the *Encyclopedia Logic*, he writes that the freedom of the idea consists in 'the free concept, the concept determining itself and thereby determining itself as reality.'[41] For Hegel the free concept is thus *a self-determining concept*. The concept that determines reality also determines itself. Its self-determination and its determination of reality are one. Hegel specifies that a reality determined as free does not simply reproduce abstract conceptual content in the empirical sphere. Rather, this determination of reality takes the form of a '*negative return into itself* and as *subjectivity*.'[42] The idea is in this sense 'essentially a *process*,' not 'an abstract, *calmly* enduring identity' but a '*negative* unity'[43] in which *subjectivity* is the determining force. Hence, the unity of the idea is ultimately not simply a 'substance' but 'subjectivity (thinking, infinity).'[44] What determines reality according to Hegel is therefore *self-determining subjectivity*. This emphasis on self-determination, subjectivity and thinking suggests that Hegel aims toward an active determination of reality that is ultimately performed by humans as spiritual beings. He is very clear that the 'true actuality' of the idea manifests 'as subject and thus as spirit.'[45] It is interesting to note how closely Hegel links nature and subjectivity. There may not be freedom in nature, but there are forms of subjectivity.

40 Ibid., §248, p. 17.
41 Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic,* §213 rem., p. 283.
42 Ibid., p. 283–4.
43 Ibid., §215 rem., p. 287.
44 Ibid.
45 Ibid., §213 rem., p. 283.

Hegel famously declares that 'nature is to be regarded as a *system of stages*, one arising necessarily from the other and being the proximate truth of the stage from which it results.'[46] He emphasizes that progression from one stage to the next is 'not generated *naturally* […] but only in the inner idea which constitutes the ground of nature.'[47] In this sense, he is not interested in species evolution but in a progressive development of the idea. The principle structuring this system of stages is 'that the idea *posits* itself as that which it is *in itself*; or what is the same thing, that it returns *into itself* out of its immediacy and externality.'[48] Hegel's goal consequently seems to be to reduce otherness and overcome the non-identity of the idea. Since the idea cannot fully actualize itself within the natural sphere, the progressive trajectory ultimately leads beyond the natural realm. The idea must 'give itself an existence as spirit, which is the truth and the final goal of nature and the genuine actuality of the idea.'[49] Thus, only in the realm of spirit can the idea actualize what it truly is.

Still, there are elementary forms of subjectivity in nature. The different stages of nature represent different levels in the realization of subjectivity. Organic life is the 'highest level to which nature attains.'[50] Hegel reminds his readers in the third part of the *Philosophy of Nature*, which deals with organic life, that the 'idea has truth and actuality only in so far as it is determined as subjective.'[51] He argues that plants and animals possess subjectivity, which is why the idea gains 'an immediate existence'[52] in nature just before the transition into spirit. Natural subjectivity manifests in the self-reproductive and self-mediating activities of organic life. A living entity exists as a 'self-reproductive being' that performs 'essentially a *self-mediating* activity.'[53] In this sense a living organic being 'only is, in making itself what it is.'[54]

Indeed, since plants constantly interact with the world around them to self-reproduce, they are subjects for Hegel – but their subjectivity remains rudimentary. A plant 'can neither freely determine its place, i.e. *move from the spot*'[55] nor can it consciously control its nutrition. It depends entirely on the environment in which it finds itself contingently placed and from which it obtains a continuous flow of water, air and light. Hegel emphasizes that plants do not have 'the *self* as inner, subjective universality over against

46 Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, §249, p. 20.
47 Ibid.
48 Ibid., §251, p. 24.
49 Ibid.
50 Ibid.
51 Ibid., §337, p. 273.
52 Ibid.
53 Ibid.
54 Ibid., §252, p. 356.
55 Ibid., §344, p. 305.

externality.'[56] Their subjectivity is for Hegel fused with their organismal materiality; plant subjectivity cannot distance itself from the organism. This means the plant is incapable of determining its existence by means of sovereign subjectivity.

For Hegel subjectivity truly exists 'as the one that which pervades the whole,'[57] starting in non-human animals. An animal is not only capable of 'spontaneously determin[ing] its place,'[58] it also actively protects itself from the outside natural world. Unlike plants, it has 'self-feeling'[59] in which its subjectivity is centered, and as a self it relates to the world via the senses. It feels, smells, sees, hears and tastes the natural world around it. Based on this sensual perception of the world, it not only appropriates and assimilates what it needs for its self-preservation but also exercises its subjectivity by manipulating its environment, for instance by building 'nests and other resting-places.'[60] Hence, it engages in many outward-directed activities that allow it to self-reproduce and gain self-certainty as an individual being centered in its subjectivity. Its actions obviously resemble and to a certain degree anticipate the activities of human subjects who epistemically and practically engage with nature.[61] Yet, animal subjectivity by Hegel's account is not itself a free subjectivity.

Hegel first indicates this lack of freedom in animal life when he describes the spontaneous determination of place of which animals are capable as '*contingent self-movement* [*zufällige Selbstbewegung*].'[62] He sees animals as choosing their locations not exactly freely but 'according to an inner contingency [*nach einer inneren Zufälligkeit*].'[63] This is certainly more than plants can do, since they cannot move around, yet it is less than what actual free choice of location would imply.

Hegel's main argument about why animals ultimately remain unfree has to do with self-consciousness. From the beginning of the *Philosophy of Nature*, he not only highlights that contingency is typical of natural phenomena but also maintains that each natural entity 'is without the concept of itself.'[64] A natural entity is what it is, but it does not *know* what it is. This claim reappears in the final paragraphs of the *Philosophy of Nature*, where Hegel writes that the animal cannot 'put an end to the general inadequacy which is inherent in it, namely, that

56 Ibid., §347, p. 336.
57 Ibid., §349, p. 350.
58 Ibid.
59 Ibid.
60 Ibid., §362, p. 390.
61 On this see Khurana, *Das Leben der Freiheit*, pp. 368–80.
62 Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, §351, p. 352. Miller translates 'zufällige Selbstbewegung' here as 'freedom of *self-movement,*' which is obviously incorrect.
63 Ibid. Miller does not translate the passage 'nach einer inneren Zufälligkeit' at all.
64 Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, §248 rem., p. 17.

(a) 'its idea is only the *immediate* idea, that,
(b) as animal, it stands *within nature*, and
(c) its subjectivity is only *implicitly* the concept but is not *for its own self* the concept.'[65]

To be *only implicitly, not for itself* is Hegel's description of the lack of self-consciousness. Since animals lack self-consciousness, they are subjects incapable of knowing they are subjects. They do not determine their own subjectivity freely. Thus animal subjectivity is not a self-determined subjectivity: it depends on something else. In Hegel's view, the other that determines an animal's subjectivity is *the genus* to which it belongs. He writes that for non-human animals the 'genus is in an *implicit*, simple unity with the singularity of the subject whose concrete substance it is.'[66] The subjectivity of the animal is therefore in a certain sense almost indistinguishable from its generic substance. Moreover, if the subjectivity of the animal depends on a substance (the genus), it does not manifest the perfect structure of the idea that Hegel has in mind. As we have seen, Hegel's conception of the idea requires that subjectivity, not a generic substance, be the determining force of reality. In addition, this subjectivity must be self-determining. Since animal subjectivity is determined by a generic substance, it is not self-determined and thus not free. Therefore, Hegel's conception of nature as that in which the idea manifests in imperfect form still pertains to animals though they represent the peak of the natural sphere.

This logic implies that being determined by a substance-like genus leads to only a contingent manifestation of that genus. An individual animal is not an exact copy of its genus and therefore is not entirely reducible to it. More concretely, the genus does not prescribe where an animal is supposed to linger or exactly which individual plant it should eat. Since animals are active in the world, contingency in the case of animal life can resemble freedom. Yet at its core the animal lacks 'the moment of free, universal self-relation.'[67] This is why there is no freedom in nature, not even in non-human animal life.

This goes hand-in-hand with the fact that the animal does not establish moral or ethical relationships with other beings. The life of an animal is for Hegel '*insecure*, *anxious*, and *unhappy*,'[68] because it is constantly confronted with the danger of being eaten by another animal. Its 'natural fate' is, as Hegel explicitly notes, to suffer a '*violent* death.'[69] Furthermore, the animal experiences the urge to copulate and reproduce. This is not a choice

65 Ibid., §374, p. 440.
66 Ibid., §367, p. 410.
67 Ibid., §248 rem., p. 17.
68 Ibid., §368 rem., p. 417.
69 Ibid.

but a drive that the genus imposes on the individuals. Such examples demonstrate why Hegel ultimately conceives of nature as a realm of generic necessity which is contingently but not freely actualized.

In summary, Hegel's characterization of nature in terms of the otherness and non-identity of the idea certainly implies that nature is a less perfect manifestation than spirit of the ideal basis of the rational world. Only spiritual reality is determined by a kind of subjectivity that is also capable of determining itself. Hegel's characterization does not imply, however, either neglect of nature or philosophical disinterest in the natural world. His understanding of nature in terms of the non-identity of the idea adheres to his ontological claim about what nature truly is: that sphere of reality which depends on a conceptual constitution but does not fully manifest it. As such, nature is the sphere of contingency. Since nature's contingency proves irreducible to the conceptual, it creates limits for philosophy that Hegel acknowledges. From the standpoint of spirit, nature's contingency is obviously a shortcoming or defect. Yet, Hegel maintains that we need to acknowledge this contingency if we want to understand what nature truly is. Indeed, the fact that one-third of his system is devoted to understanding nature proves that he took this endeavor seriously.

10.3 The Vanishing of Nature in Spirit

In the opening paragraphs of the *Philosophy of Spirit*, Hegel declares that spirit 'is the *truth* of nature, and is thus *absolutely first* with respect to it.'[70] He then adds, 'In this truth nature has vanished.'[71] This depiction is obviously highly evocative. In fact, such vanishing of nature may seem to suggest the complete disappearance of nature in the sphere of spirit. Showing that this is not in fact what Hegel means to say requires careful interpretation.

Firstly, Hegel clearly defends the priority of spirit over nature. Even if it seems that 'spirit has *nature* as its *presupposition*,'[72] according to Hegel the truth is the inverse. Spirit, not nature, comes 'absolutely first.'[73] For Hegel it is precisely in this truth that nature has vanished. He specifies that the vanishing of nature in the truth of spirit goes hand-in-hand with the emergence of spirit 'as the idea that has reached its being-for-self. The object of the idea as well as the subject is the concept.'[74] Hence, the emergence of spirit entails a complete actualization of the idea. As we saw in the previous section, such actualization is not possible within the sphere of nature, because only spirit allows for

70 G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, translated by W. Wallace & A.V. Miller, revised by M. Inwood, Oxford: Oxford UP 2007, §381, p. 9. I replaced the word 'mind' with the word 'spirit' in this translation.

71 Ibid.

72 Ibid.

73 Ibid.

74 Ibid.

completely free self-relation. Rather, it is in the transition from nature to spirit that the non-identity of the idea vanishes. In spirit, the idea no longer exists in the form of otherness. It instead exists in the form of free self-relation. The vanishing of nature is hence a vanishing of the deficient form in which the idea exists in nature. It is not a vanishing of nature *in toto*.[75]

Secondly, the fact that nature does not cease to exist relates to Hegel's claim that the self-relation of the idea in spirit constitutes not pure identity but '*absolute negativity*.'[76] The negativity of this identity manifests three features:

(a) 'in nature the concept has its complete, external objectivity,
(b) but this externalization of the concept has been sublated
(c) and the concept has, in this externalization, become identical with itself.'[77]

Hegel's argument here is that the idea cannot be seen as a positive identity, because it passes through a process of externalization. It is only in the negativity of this externalization that the idea establishes an identity with itself. His point is that this kind of identity includes externality and difference. How Hegel speaks of nature in this context is telling: nature now appears as the 'external objectivity' of the idea. This external objectivity differs from the form of otherness in which the idea exists in nature, which, as we have seen, implies an incomplete determination of reality in two senses: first, because it cannot fully account for the contingency of natural phenomena, and second, because natural entities do not exhibit freedom. In contrast, externality in spirit does not imply any lack or shortcoming. The externality in which the idea establishes its identity is, Hegel claims, completely determined by the idea. The idea is only identical with itself in this externality because it achieves complete determination. Moreover, the idea is at one with itself to the degree that it achieves such complete determination. In establishing this negative identity, the idea proves its freedom. What it is free from is externality, since it completely determines its other and makes it its own. What therefore vanishes is any indication of independent, indeterminate nature. Nature still exists but is completely determined by the idea.

Thirdly, this ideal determination of nature as external objectivity is not given as soon as we enter the sphere of spirit. Hegel notably introduces this point in a section entitled 'Concept of Spirit.' What he says about the concept of spirit defines spirit *in principle*, or rather when it is developed in full and to perfection. This definition does, however, not exhaust how spirit actually exists in

75 Also see Michael Quante's reconstruction of this problem in *Spirit's Actuality* (Paderborn: Mentis, 2018), pp. 85–102.
76 Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, §381, p. 9.
77 Ibid.

its many forms. The *Philosophy of Spirit* proceeds from subjective to objective and then absolute spirit. Hegel is very clear that the determination of nature as nothing but the objectivity of the idea is fully accomplished only in the last of these 'stages,' in absolute spirit. The first two parts of the *Philosophy of Spirit* discuss 'finite spirit,' the forms of spirit in which it is still confronted with an independent nature that remains to be determined and appropriated. As finite spirit passes through the various stages, it is progressively liberated from a reality that it first experiences as given, as nature. Complete liberation from this given nature, as Hegel describes it, entails a tripartite process in which

(a) '*finding* a world *before* it as a presupposed world,
(b) *generating* a world as posited by itself,
(c) and gaining freedom from it and in it – are one and the same.'[78]

According to this schema, *finding* and *generating* reality coincide if the liberation from an initially given reality is successful. Liberating myself from the natural world means finding myself in that world as I appropriate it. In a '*Zusatz*,' Hegel elaborates how finite spirit relates to nature: it 'posits nature as […] its world, strips nature of its form of an other confronting it and makes the other opposing it into something posited by spirit itself.'[79] At this point, this is what the successful appropriation of nature looks like. Yet Hegel goes on to underscore that,

> at the same time, this other still remains independent of spirit, something immediately present, not posited but only presupposed by spirit, something, therefore, the positing of which precedes reflective thinking. Hence at this standpoint the positedness of nature by spirit is not yet absolute but comes about only in reflective consciousness.[80]

He concludes by stating that: 'Here, consequently, spirit still has in nature a limitation and by this very limitation is finite spirit.'[81] Nature thus does not vanish once and for all as soon as we enter the realm of spirit but rather only after spirit appropriates it and makes it its own. This moreover constitutes a continuous process, not a simple state of affairs.

10.4 The Presence and Resistance of Nature in Spirit

In fact, the presence of nature stretches further than Hegel is ready to admit. In art, the first form of absolute spirit, Hegel still grants relevance to the natural.

78 Ibid., §386, p. 22.
79 Ibid., §384 Zusatz, p. 19.
80 Ibid.
81 Ibid.

In order to express spiritual content, artworks need 'an external given material' as well as 'the given forms of nature with their meaning, which art must discern and appropriate.'[82] There is a unity of nature and spirit in artworks, yet not, as Hegel explains, 'the spiritual unity in which the natural is posited only as something ideal, something sublated, and the spiritual content stands in relation only to itself.'[83] Since nature is not fully sublated, absolute spirit is not fully actualized in art. Even if the sublation of nature is eventually accomplished in the higher forms of absolute spirit, religion and philosophy, art still demonstrates the far-reaching importance of nature in Hegel's system.

It is instructive to look at how Hegel conceives of the initial stage of the liberation of spirit from nature in the *Anthropology*. The first form in which spirit appears as finite is the soul. Hegel defines spirit qua soul as 'the universal immateriality of nature' and the 'absolute foundation of all the particularizing and individualizing of spirit.'[84] He further emphasizes this immateriality when he describes the soul as 'the existent truth of matter' in which 'matter itself has no truth.'[85] In other words, 'self-externality, which constitutes the fundamental determination of matter, has completely evaporated into the subjective ideality of the concept, into universality.'[86] Such strong statements once again seem to suggest nature has completely vanished in spirit, as soon as it enters this sphere. Yet again, if we look carefully, we see that this is not what Hegel really means. In the *Anthropology*, he immediately foregrounds the '*natural qualities*'[87] that the soul, as the immaterial truth of nature, still bears. Since materiality and natural qualities belong to the soul, they of course are not independent, but this does not mean they are inexistent. It is precisely this point that Hegel repeats in the subsection 'The Feeling Soul' when he notes that ideality implies 'the negation of the real, but the real is also stored up, virtually retained.'[88] As a matter of principle, Hegel thus assumes a certain negative freedom from nature for spirit. Yet, it would be reductive to reconstruct the freedom of spirit as a mere metaphysical axiom onto which Hegel's argument always falls back. Rather, freedom for Hegel, in its full and proper sense, is a practical achievement.[89] Spirit must prove its power over the natural by appropriating it. In such appropriation, spirit actualizes real freedom. This becomes evident in the *Anthropology* when Hegel retraces the process by which spirit gains predominance over several forms of natural determinacy. In what follows, I will reconstruct Hegel's view firstly by looking at the beginning of the

82 Ibid., §558, p. 259.
83 Ibid.
84 Ibid., §389, p. 29.
85 Ibid.
86 Ibid., §389 rem., p. 30.
87 Ibid., §391, p. 35.
88 Ibid., §403 rem., p. 87–8.
89 For a practical reading of Hegel's *Philosophy of Spirit* and freedom as an achievement c.f. Pippin, *Hegel's Practical Philosophy*, pp. 36–64.

Anthropology, where nature appears in its strongest form, and then the end, where nature is eventually sublated (i). I will then analyze the foundations of this sublation (ii) before outlining Hegel's discussion of a state of the soul in which nature remains unsublated (iii).

(i) Hegel charts out which natural qualities play out in the soul. The soul leads a 'life of nature,' as he expressly calls it, and experiences 'the difference of climates, the changes of seasons, the periods of the day, etc.'[90] He considers racial differences and diverse 'modes of life, occupation, bodily structure and disposition'[91] as influenced by natural conditions in different geographical regions. Hegel furthermore acknowledges a certain influence of nature on variance in 'temperament, talent, character, physiognomy, and other dispositions and idiosyncrasies, in families or in single individuals.'[92] In addition, the '*course of the ages of life*,'[93] from childhood to old age, and the 'sexual relationship, a natural distinction,' which ''acquires its spiritual and ethical significance and determination in the family,'[94] are counted among the natural aspects of spirit.

Hegel clarifies his basic idea about the freedom of spirit in the context of these phenomena. Whereas plants and animals remain entirely subject to their natural life, humans as spiritual beings can liberate themselves from it: 'the more cultivated [a human being] is and the more [the human being's] whole condition rests on a free, spiritual foundation, the less the significance that such [natural] connections have.'[95] As the 'freedom of spirit gets a deeper grasp of itself, even these few and slight dispositions, based on participation in the life of nature, disappear.'[96] Hegel is thus confident that humans as spiritual beings do not remain at the mercy of nature but can liberate themselves from it. This implies that none of the natural conditions he mentions, from climate to sex, predetermine spirit in a definitive way.

Hegel's analysis in the *Anthropology* elaborates how the soul successively establishes a self-determined existence as it proves its freedom from nature. The maximum freedom that the soul can achieve is described at the end of the *Anthropology* as what Hegel calls 'the actual soul.' The actual soul exhibits the tripartite scheme that he introduced in the introductory paragraphs of the *Philosophy of Spirit*. It has

(a) 'set its being in opposition to itself'
(b) 'sublated it'
(c) 'and determined it as its own.'[97]

90 Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, §392, p. 35.
91 Ibid.
92 Ibid., §395, p. 49.
93 Ibid., §396, p. 53.
94 Ibid., §397, p. 62.
95 Ibid. §392 rem., p. 36.
96 Ibid.
97 Ibid., §412, p. 140.

The being which is set in opposition to and appropriated by the soul is the body. The body thus is not just a natural given but something in which spirit can be at one with itself. By setting the body in opposition to itself, sublating, and appropriating it, spirit qua soul liberates itself from being determined by the materiality and naturalness of the body. It accomplishes this liberation through forming and appropriating the body. In the body, the soul is 'related only to itself,'[98] not to the body as an independent material reality. In this context, Hegel underlines that the materiality of the body 'can offer no resistance to the soul's incorporation in it,' because 'matter has no truth within the soul.'[99] The body's 'externality represents not itself, but the soul, of which it is the *sign*.'[100] To underline its spiritual significance, Hegel ultimately calls the body 'the soul's work of art.'[101]

When in this context Hegel again repeats that matter has no truth in the soul, he nonetheless does not deny that materiality and nature continue to be at play. Rather, his point is that matter and the natural no longer exist for themselves. Moreover, his claim that the truth of nature is to be sought in spirit does not imply that in spirit nature simply ceases to be. Hegel's decisive claim in this regard is that *nature cannot resist the activities of spirit*. Our body functions as a transparent medium of our spiritual activities. If the soul is happy, the body expresses this emotion toward the world. The crucial point is that the body plays only a mediating function at the level of the actual soul. Nature as nature is therefore certainly weak, but it is not inexistent.

In order to see how the soul's liberation from nature takes place, we need to trace Hegel's conception of the actual soul back to the notion on which it depends, the theory of habit, and then even further back to Hegel's account of the soul-body-relation before the soul is free, the theory of derangement. 'Habit' in Hegel's analysis defines the paradigm of free and thus whole self-relation; 'derangement' is the paradigm of pathological self-relation determined by nature.

(ii) Hegel's main point about habit is that it renders liberation possible without annihilating that which the soul liberates itself from: the body and all the natural qualities connected with it.[102] The natural in this context appears as affective and emotional states that the soul experiences as given,

98 Ibid., §411, p. 136.
99 Ibid., §412, p. 140.
100 Ibid., §411, p. 136.
101 Ibid.
102 For a discussion of contemporary interpretations of Hegel's theory of habit, see Andreja Novakovic, 'Hegel's Anthropology' in *The Oxford Handbook of Hegel* (Oxford, Oxford UP, 2017), pp. 480–2.

i.e. 'desires, urges, passions, and their gratifications.'[103] Ultimately, however, it is the body in its materiality that resists the soul. Habit for Hegel is basically a practical behavior in which the soul incorporates and molds the body. This molding is finally completed in the real soul, as we have already seen. According to Hegel, the 'essential determination is the liberation from sensations that man gains through habit, when he is affected by them.'[104] In the transformation brought about by habit, the body loses its resistance to the soul as habit 'reduces the particularity of feelings (of consciousness too) to a determination in [the soul] that just *is*': 'The soul is free of them, in so far as it is not interested in or occupied with them, while it exists in these forms as its possessions.'[105]

It is important to note that the soul does not free itself from the body or its sensations and affections by means of denial. Rather, it develops a habitual way of living with the affective states that come with the body. Hegel argues that if the soul becomes habituated to its affections, it exists 'in these forms as its possessions,' meaning it is 'open to other activity and occupations, in the sphere of sensation and spirit's consciousness in general.'[106] Whoever deals with something habitually does so non-intentionally and unconsciously. Walking upright is a good example. We stand upright because we have learned to do so and it has become habit. Standing requires 'practice' and 'repetition' before it can eventually become a habit and 'mechanism of self-feeling'[107] with which we no longer deal intentionally. Since our intentions are no longer occupied with this activity, we are free to focus our attention on other, potentially more important projects.

The conviction that liberation in habit does not imply renunciation or denial is one of the main points Hegel illustrates with examples. He underscores that a truly liberating 'indifference towards satisfaction' does not come from ascetic repression of desires and drives but, to the contrary, from our cultivation of 'the *habit* of their satisfaction.'[108] As we routinely satisfy our needs, we can profoundly free ourselves from being determined by them. In this form of liberation, our needs, desires and drives do not disappear. Hegel makes this very clear in his description of habit as a '*hardening*,' for instance in relation to harsh weather conditions or the 'weariness of the limbs.'[109] Frost, as he writes, is 'of course sensed by man,' but as soon as we become habituated to cold weather the sensation 'is reduced to

103 Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, §409, p. 130.
104 Ibid., §410 rem., p. 131.
105 Ibid., §410, p. 131.
106 Ibid.
107 Ibid.
108 Ibid., §410 rem., p. 132.
109 Ibid.

an externality' in which the soul is 'no longer involved.'[110] Someone accustomed to cold weather is no longer determined by these conditions but able to disengage from them. In this sense, spirit does not prevent natural events from occurring or stop the weather from getting cold. Still, spirit can weaken the effect of natural events by producing a practical way of dealing with them.

Hegel's example of 'habit as *dexterity*' in dealing with the body is particularly illustrative in this context and highlights the persisting relationship between spirit and nature: through dexterity, we impose 'a subjective purpose within bodiliness,'[111] i.e. acquire the skill of knitting or gymnastics. Hegel notes that 'bodiliness is determined as *immediate external* being and barrier'[112] for the subjective purpose the soul wants to actualize. The soul is inhibited in actualizing its purpose as it is confronted with the body's 'initial naturalness [*erste Natürlichkeit*] and immediacy.'[113] Hegel speaks of the initially natural character of the body as it resists what the soul wants to achieve. The soul must therefore transform the body into an 'instrument' that serves the soul's purposes 'unresistingly and fluently,'[114] and this can be achieved only through practice, the acquisition of dexterity. As soon as we have acquired dexterity in gymnastics or knitting, for example, we can perform these activities in a way that resembles a mechanical behavior.

Two essential points regarding the liberation offered by habit should be highlighted. First and foremost, the liberation of the soul consists in the formation of a habitual and thus practical ability to handle natural events. What is mitigated is the *effect* of these events on spirit; their occurrence is not prevented. Secondly, Hegel's examples indicate he is convinced that natural events, in principle, are manageable by habit. According to Hegel, we can get used to frost, to activities requiring skills, and even to thinking, which can literally cause 'headaches'[115] for the inexperienced mind. The belief that all these things can be addressed through habit reveals Hegel's philosophical optimism about the power of spirit. However, the optimism that spirit is well-equipped enough to handle nature wherever it appears must prove itself, for Hegel, in practice.

(iii) In the paragraph immediately preceding the discussion of habit, Hegel declares that derangement of spirit is possible 'owing to the moment of bodiliness'[116] with which the soul is connected. By employing the conception of derangement, Hegel points beyond the field of anthropology. He states that a subject who is 'educated to intellectual consciousness, is still

110 Ibid.
111 Ibid.
112 Ibid.
113 Ibid.
114 Ibid.
115 Ibid., p. 133.
116 Ibid., §408, p. 114.

susceptible to the disease.'[117] Derangement consists in the subject's 'remaining fast in a particularity of its self-feeling, unable to refine it to ideality and overcome it.'[118] In this case, the subject 'fails to assign that content the intelligible place and the subordinate position belonging to it in the individual world-system which a subject is.'[119] On the other hand, a 'sober and healthy' subject 'has an alert consciousness of the ordered totality of its individual world, into the system of which it subsumes each particular content of sensation, idea, desire, inclination, etc., as it arises, and inserts in its intelligible place in the system.'[120] Thus, in derangement a subject suffers from the inability to master its own affectivity and bodiliness, its inability to free itself from being determined by them.[121]

Hegel explicitly highlights the role nature plays in this process. He emphasizes that spirit as such is free and 'therefore not susceptible for itself to this disease,' and only 'as something *natural* and *in being*, is it liable to derangement.'[122] For derangement is a 'psychical disease, i.e. a disease of the body and spirit alike.'[123] This remark implies that spirit is susceptible to derangement whenever it exists in connection with the physical, material world. Hence, in principle not all forms of finite spirit are immune from being overwhelmed by the natural. Furthermore, Hegel points out that in derangement 'the self-seeking determinations of the heart, vanity, pride, and the subject's other passions and imaginings, hopes, love and hatred'[124] are set free. He explicitly refers to these selfish affects as the raw natural states of the soul: an 'earthly throng' that 'gets free, when self-possession and the universal, theoretical or moral principles, lose their power over the natural forces that they usually suppress and keep concealed.'[125] Such selfish affects are an 'evil implicitly present within the heart, because the heart, being immediate, is natural and selfish.' It is therefore ultimately 'the evil genius

117 Ibid.
118 Ibid.
119 Ibid., p. 114–5.
120 Ibid., §408 rem., p. 115.
121 Furlotte sees in this affectivity and bodiliness the 'register of unconscious interiority that subjectivity is overwhelmed by' and further describes this unconscious as a 'virtual reserve' connected 'by way of a labyrinthine passageway…to the material past of spirit, its bio-physical anteriority' (*The Problem of Nature*, p. 129). Inspired by the language of psychoanalysis, Furlotte often describes derangement and nature as sources of trauma for spirit (e.g. p. 100, 121, 125ff.). I think this language gives the impression that derangement is always an extreme event. In my view, in his theory of derangement Hegel also means to include everyday experiences of being caught up in our feelings, which challenge the freedom of spirit without being extreme.
122 Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, §408 rem., p. 115.
123 Ibid.
124 Ibid.
125 Ibid.

of man that becomes dominant in derangement' and leads to 'distress and breakdown within spirit itself.'[126]

A careful look at how Hegel discusses the treatment of derangement reveals that he places his trust entirely in habit. He agrees with the psychiatrist Philippe Pinel that 'derangement is not an abstract *loss* of reason' but 'only a contradiction in the reason which is still present.'[127] Accordingly, its treatment requires strengthening reason. The '*Zusätze*' reveal the extent of Hegel's deep interest in different forms of therapy. There we find that Hegel maintain the deranged 'deserve considerate treatment' due 'to their rationality which is not yet entirely destroyed.'[128] The main task of therapy is thus to turn them 'to other thoughts,' for instance by encouraging them 'to occupy themselves mentally and especially physically.' Hegel seems to think it might be possible to distract these subjects from their deranged subjectivity 'by *work*,' by which 'they are forced out of their diseased subjectivity and impelled towards the actual.'[129] What Hegel recommends is thus that the mentally ill become active. He expects that activity will enable such subjects to pull themselves out of their pathologies and once again become habituated to a healthy relationship between themselves and their affective states.

Despite such optimism, Hegel by no means suggests that healing is guaranteed.[130] The success of healing depends on whether a subject proves able to develop a habitual way of dealing with its affective nature. This is a practical problem. Moreover, it is certainly not absolute negativity or an allegedly pre-established freedom of spirit that provides a divine cure for derangement. Our natural affective states may become so strong and deranging that they cannot be habitually accommodated or mastered by spirit. Rather, these affective states, which Hegel connects with nature, function as a determining force. In this case, nature determines spirit, not spirit nature.

We can thus conclude that nature is not only present in the sphere of spirit, it may even resist spirit. The possibility of such resistance speaks to the fact that spirit does not from the outset constitute a strictly self-sufficient realm. Rather, spirit is active in a world against which it struggles. An enduring relevance of the *Encyclopedia* lies in the fact that it not only shows how spirit achieves perfection but also how it struggles – and in doing so can fail.

126 Ibid.

127 Ibid.

128 Ibid., p. 128.

129 Ibid., p. 129. For a critical commentary on Pinel's and Hegel's perspectives on treatment, see Michel Foucault's seminal analysis in *History of Madness* (New York: Routledge, 2009).

130 Furlotte also maintains that 'there is nothing in [Hegel's] analysis that guarantees that the subject's natural dimension will not, at any given moment, (re-)assert itself in a way that destabilises subjectivity's free actualisation.' (*The Problem of Nature*, p. 9, see also p. 151–2).

11 The Two Souls

Some Remarks on Hegel's Investigation of 'Soul' in the *Philosophy of Subjective Spirit* and *Philosophy of Nature*

Luca Corti

Introduction

In the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, Hegel discusses 'soul' and its cognitive aspects twice: once within his treatment of the natural realm (at the end of the *Philosophy of Nature*, in relation to the animal organism), and once in his account of the spiritual realm (at the beginning of the *Philosophy of Spirit*).

This placement of 'soul' in both the natural and spiritual domains is noteworthy, for it opens up both textual and philosophical problems: to what extent is 'soul' natural for Hegel? Does the animal 'soul' differ from the human 'soul'? Is there an identity shared between the two or is this a simple case of homonymy? Do animal and human cognition share some common components? Can human cognition (or the part of it called soul) be considered 'natural'?

This cluster of questions constitutes what Bernard Bourgeois has called the problem of the 'two souls.'[1] Addressing this problem is crucial to understanding Hegel's broader conception of the relationship between *Geist* and nature, as well his stance on 'naturalism' with regard to human cognition.

Aside from Bourgeois, other scholars have also noticed the presence of puzzling thematic repetitions in Hegel's text, including the doubling of the notion of 'soul.' The problem posed by such repetitions, however, has not been granted much scholarly attention.[2]

1 Bernard Bourgeois, 'Les deux âmes: de la nature à l'esprit' in *De saint Thomas à Hegel*, edited by J.L. Vieillard Baron (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1994), pp. 117–51.

2 On thematic repetitions in the *Philosophy of Nature and Philosophy of Spirit* see for instance Paul Ziche, 'Psychologie und Anthropologie bei Hegel,' in *Hegel und die Lebenswissenschaften*, edited by O. Breidbach and D. von Engelhardt, (Berlin: VWB, 2002), p. 176; Heikki Ikäheimo, *Self-consciousness and Intersubjectivity: A Study on Hegel's Encyclopedia Philosophy of Subjective Spirit (1830)* (Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä Publications in Philosophy, 2000), p. 31; Alison Stone, *Petrified Intelligence. Nature in Hegel's Philosophy* (New York: SUNY 2005), p. 194, fn. 23.

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In this article, I will approach the question (and show its relevance) by locating it within a broader context, namely what Stephen Gaukroger has identified as the progressive 'naturalization of the human'[3] that occurred in 18th and early 19th-century German philosophy. This large-scale process of naturalization involved various disciplines and was driven by the attempt to answer traditional questions about the human subject with the resources provided by the growing natural sciences, i.e. empirical evidence, rather than with metaphysical or *apriori* reasoning. As Gaukroger and others have stressed, such attempts to naturalize the human consistently appeared under the name 'anthropology' and 'psychology'; both disciplines experienced a progressive scientific autonomization and saw the emergence of new empirically oriented methodologies.[4]

Hegel's own reflections on 'soul' in his *Lectures on Anthropology and Psychology, or Philosophy of Spirit* – as well as in his *Philosophy of Nature* – belong to this landscape and its general emergence of a new, naturalistic perspective on 'soul' and cognition.

We will see how Hegel engages such debates and what stance he takes towards the issue of naturalization.

My paper will discuss Hegel's treatment of soul against this background. First, I will outline the historical context by surveying key moments in the emergence of naturalist anthropologies in late 18th century Germany. Gaukroger's analysis – especially his core claim that the main route to the naturalization of the human lay in the 'naturalization of sensibility' – will be my point of departure for exploring the versions naturalization that were historically relevant for Hegel's articulation of the issues.

Second, I will outline Hegel's analysis of animal 'soul' in the *Philosophy of Nature* and his corresponding *Lectures*. I will explore how Hegel treats 'sensibility' and its physiological elements in animals and humans, as well as the role of the physiological more generally in Hegel's understanding of 'sensation' as a cognitive element.

Third, I will address Hegel's treatment of the ostensibly human 'soul' and human 'sensation' in the *Anthropology*, highlighting Hegel's argument and his treatment of the difference between animal and human cognition.

3 Stephen Gaukroger, *The Natural and the Human. Science and the Shaping of Modernity, 173–1841* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

4 On the so-called 'rise of anthropology' see John H. Zammito, *Kant, Herder and the Birth of Anthropology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002) and Hans-Jürgen Schings (ed.) *Der ganze Mensch. Anthropologie und Literatur im 18. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1994). On the development of psychology see Georg Eckardt, Matthias John, Temilo van Zantwijk and Paul Ziche (eds.), *Anthropologie und Psychologie um 1800* (Köln-Weimar-Wien: Böhlau 2001) and Paul Ziche, 'Wissenschaftssystematische Aspekte der Fachgebiete Anthropologie und Psychologie um 1800,' in *Naturwissenschaften um 1800*, edited by O. Breidbach and P. Ziche (Weimar: Böhlau, 2001).

While some scholars attribute Hegel with describing 'soul' as a set of common capacities shared by humans and animals, I will instead argue that Hegel logically distinguished between the human and animal 'soul' in a way that's more radical than many interpreters think. Indeed, there are good reasons to think that for Hegel our understanding of animal 'soul' or animal 'sensation' is conceptually dependent on how we understand these notions in the human case. In making this argument, I will show that although Hegel's treatment of sensibility is empirically informed, his discussion of 'sensation' at the cognitive level cannot be considered 'naturalistic.' In fact, Hegel defends his account of mind by methodologically distinguishing it from (and attacking) contemporary programs that he labels 'Naturalismus.'

11.1 The Naturalization of the Human

Stephen Gaukroger's recent work focuses on the large-scale transformation of the 18th and early 19th-century philosophical landscape, which he identifies as the 'naturalization of the human.' As Gaukroger notes, this historical process was part of a larger sea change in the scientific culture of the period:

> What comes to the fore in the course of the eighteenth century is what I have termed naturalization: a concerted attempt to argue that questions that had been treated as conceptual or a priori were in fact more fruitfully pursued in empirical terms. … This empirical investigation took a range of forms—medical, historical, physiological, anatomical, environmental, economic, and so on—and there was some disagreement on what the appropriate form was in many cases.[5]

Gaukroger's narrative isolates the most important phases of this historical process as different 'projects of naturalization' that emerged over a period spanning from the French Enlightenment to German *Spätaufklärung*. He identifies common threads, main differences and key influences as well as the scientific and philosophical transformations that led to such a profound and wide-ranging paradigm shift.[6]

5 Gaukroger, 'The Natural and The Human,' p. 18. See also Ibid., p. 8: 'The new scientific culture of the second half of the eighteenth century was effected primarily by means of a process of naturalization of the human, that is, he formulation in empirical terms of questions about the human realm that had up to that point taken a non-empirical form.' The same in Ibid p. 68, 'Naturalization is an attempt to draw on the successes of empirical disciplines by posing in empirical terms questions that had not been posed in this way before.'

6 Gaukroger mostly focuses on four: (a) anthropological medicine, (b) philosophical anthropology, (c) natural history of man and (d) social arithmetic. I will not challenge this taxonomy. Instead, I will focus on the first two projects, deepening the context of Gaukroger´s reconstruction through the work of other scholars. For a detailed overview of the development of German 'anthropologies' starting from the Enlightenment, see Tanja Van Hoorn 'Das anthropologische Feld der Aufklärung. Ein heuristisches Modell und ein exemplari-

Gaukroger's definition of naturalization is quite broad: it refers to all programs that approached traditional questions in empirical terms. As Gaukroger claims, 'naturalization' was not a unitary project but rather a cluster of attempts to inquire into traditional questions related to the human not with metaphysical reasoning but the new empirical means provided by the natural sciences.

> The range of resources that naturalizing strategies might draw upon are varied, and they are not necessarily consistent with one another. In particular, there is no such thing as naturalization per se. Naturalization was not a single programme.[7]

In this context, Gaukroger claims, it is possible to clearly identify two main lines of thought underlying the phenomenon of naturalization in its 18th and early 19th-century form. He shows how both processes impacted the study of human cognition in various ways and catalyzed a redetermination of the notion of 'soul' and its capacities. (a) The first was heightened attention to the phenomenon of 'sensibility.' As Gaukroger shows, 'sensibility was the route to the naturalization of the human.'[8] (b) The second one was questioning of the human/animal divide. Factors such as the establishment of new disciplines (i.e. comparative anatomy) and new empirical interest in natural history and other biological areas, for instance primates, led to a series of debates regarding the 'kinship' between humans and animals and the possibility of treating the latter in natural scientific terms. These two intertwined processes characterized the emergence of various attempts to understand human cognition and human soul in 'naturalistic' terms.[9]

Within this context established by Gaukroger, I would like to underscore and further develop the two naturalizing approaches that were particularly relevant to Hegel's work. For instance, Gaukroger notes the progressive shift from metaphysically oriented accounts of 'sensation' towards empirically oriented analysis of the phenomenon – carried out under the name

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scher Situierungsversuch,' in *Natur-Mensch- Kultur. Georg Forster im Wissenschaftsfeld seiner Zeit*, edited by J. Garber and T. van Hoorn (Hannover: Wehrhahn 2006), pp. 125–41, Schings (ed.) 'Der Ganze Mensch' and Eckardt et al. (1994) and Eckardt et al. '*Anthropologie und Psychologie um 1800.*'

7 Gaukroger, 'The Natural and the Human,' p. 119. This definition is explicitly neutral with regards to questions such as the ontological and methodological reductionism among disciplines. Moreover, the definition of what counts as 'natural science' is left open. The commitment to natural scientific explanations as the primary form of explanation of the human, as well as to empirical investigation as the core source of knowledge of the human, is common among many programs and in line with current naturalistic assumptions.

8 Gaukroger, 'The Natural and The Human,' p. 221.

9 On the emergence of empirical approaches to human mind and cognition in Germany under the name 'anthropology,' see Eckart-John et al., *Anthropologie und Psychologie um 1800*.

sensibilité – which began during the Enlightenment in the 1750s and 1760s.[10] Albrecht von Haller's pioneering work in physiology played a central role in this process. Haller's distinction between 'sensibility' and 'irritability' established the agenda as well as the vocabulary for decades of debates in various domains.[11] Though Haller himself was not directly interested in studying the mind – and indeed left his characterization of 'sensibility' quite undetermined – the conceptual framework he introduced opened up the possibility of inquiring into cognition in distinctly natural-scientific terms.

I will not trace here the complex fate of Haller's distinction in 18th and 19th century philosophical and scientific thought. For my purposes, it is sufficient to focus on one figure whose work closely followed Haller's: Charles Bonnet – whose analysis of cognition was responsible for the 'extension of physiological investigation into the realm of the psychological.'[12] Bonnet's views were laid out in the influential treatise *Essai analytique sur les facultés de l'ame* (1760) and alluded to in the previous *Essai de psychologie* (1755).

Two things are important to highlight about Bonnet's approach. First, at the methodological level, Bonnet set the agenda for future study in the field of empirical psychology by putting 'observation' and empirical evidence at the core of his investigative method. Bonnet maintained that the 'science of the soul, like science of the body, rests only on observation and experience.'[13] In the numerous methodological remarks contained in his work, Bonnet takes particular care to articulate the importance and principles of what he calls the 'art of observation.' According to Bonnet's logic of scientific inquiry, the scientist should start by collecting observations, then group together facts, and finally derive principles and laws from induction. Bonnet first put this methodological approach to work in his works on natural history, but then extended it to study of the mind, which Bonnet approached in the spirit of an 18th century naturalist ('I plan to study the

10 Gaukroger 'The Natural and the Human,' p. 134. Sensibility became the name for a variety of things. On this topic cf. Henry Martyn Lloyd (ed.), *The Discourse of Sensibility*: *The Knowing Body in the Enlightenment* (Cham: Springer, 2013).

11 On Haller's definition, as well as the ways in which his distinction radically changed the debate around key notions such as life and matter in both a natural scientific and philosophical context, see François Duchesneau, 'Degrees and Forms of Sensibility in Haller's Physiology,' in *Human and Animal Cognition in Early Modern Philosophy and Medicine*, edited by S. Buchenau and R. Lo Presti (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2017), pp. 201–21 and Charles Wolfe, 'Sensibility as Vital Force or as Property of Matter in Mid-Eighteenth-Century Debates' , in 'The Discourse of Sensibility,' pp. 147–70.

12 Stephen Gaukroger, 'Anthropological Medicine and the Naturalisation of sensibility' in 'Human and Animal Cognition in Early Modern Philosophy and Medicine,' p. 228.

13 Charles Bonnet, *Essai analytique sur les facultés de l'âme* (Geneva: Slatkine. Reimpression of the edition *Paris-Copenhague*, *1760*), p. XVII, my transl.

human being, as I have studied insects and plants,' he states in the opening remarks of his *Essai*[14]).

Secondly, on this basis, Bonnet embarked in an ambitious project that, in going beyond Hallerian physiology, was responsible for 'extending the account of 'sensible fibers' to mental acts.'[15] One of his core ideas is that the soul is dependent on movement in the body, and in particular the movement of brain fibers. He formulates what historians of psychology have defined as 'the core principle of Enlightenment Psychology,'[16]

> We know the soul only through its faculties; we know these faculties only through their effects. These effects manifest themselves through the intermediary of the body.[17]

Bonnet's *Essai* notably reconstructs the genesis of human cognitive activities starting from sensation, giving a physiological explanation of cognitive performance in terms of the vibrations of brain fibers. Yet, Bonnet was not a reductionist. He maintained that one could (and indeed should) recognize the existence of an immaterial human 'soul' but that such a belief added nothing relevant to our comprehension of cognition. Following this assumption, Bonnet argued that two identical fiber-configurations in a brain would correspond to the same numerical soul. A human brain and a brain of an automaton with the same exact configuration thus would be the same 'soul.'

> Reminiscence, Memory, Imagination would be the same for this soul and that of the automaton. For all this is connected to the determinations acquired by the fibers of the brain, and such determinations are absolutely independent from the soul. The feelings that a soul experiences are always related to the kind, the movement and the status of the fibers that make the soul feel them.[18]

14 Bonnet, 'Essai Analitique,' p. I. On Bonnet's methodological commitment to 'observation' see Raymond Savioz, *La philosophie de Charles Bonnet de Genève* (Paris: Vrin, 1948), chap. 14, as well as Marc Ratcliff, 'Une métaphysique de la méthode chez Charles Bonnet,' in *Charles Bonnet savant et philosophe (1720–1793)*, edited by Marino Buscaglia et al. (Geneva: Editions Passé Présent, 1994). See also the introductory remark in the *Essai*: 'I have looked for facts, I have focused on them; I came close to them, I compared them, and I paid attention to the consequences that seemed to come from them' (Bonnet, 'Essai Analitique,' page 3, my transl.).

15 Gaukroger, 'The Natural and the Human,' p. 131.

16 Fernando Vidal, *The Sciences of the* Soul*: The Early Modern Origins of* Psychology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 11.

17 Charles Bonnet, 'Essai de psychologie,' in *Œuvres d'histoire naturelle et de philosophie*, 4th ed. (Neuchâtel: Samuel Fauche, 1779–1783), vol. 8, p. 1.

18 Bonnet, *Essai,* § 770. On this passage see Fernando Vidal, 'Brainhood, Anthropological Figure of Modernity,' History of the Human Sciences 22(1), pp. 5–36.

In one of his most famous examples, Bonnet imagines that the brain of Montesquieu is transposed into the body of a Huron with no loss of cognitive function: 'if a Huron's soul could have inherited Montesquieu's brain, Montesquieu would still create.'[19]

Bonnet's theory became an influential paradigm for the empirically oriented, naturalistic approach to 'soul.'[20] To understand why this is relevant to Hegel requires noting how ideas expressed in Bonnet's *Essai* came to be influential in German philosophical discourse: soon after its appearance, the book was translated into German by Christian Gottfried Schütz, one of the first Kantians in Jena, and it grew quickly in popularity and was largely discussed in Germany. Bonnet's ideas inspired several empirical psychology programs, including L. H. Jakobs' *Grundriss der Erfahrungsseelenlehre* (1791) and C. C. E. Schmid's very influential *Empirische Psychologie* (1791) – one of the most popular handbooks in the discipline.[21]

However, the Bonnetian approach to mind also influenced various other research programs with a more reductivistic flavor. Herder, for instance, inspired by Haller, espoused a reductive form of naturalism in his *Essay On Cognition and Sensation of Human Soul* (1778). There Herder draws from the results of Haller's physiology to construct an account according to which, in Herder's words, 'no *psychology* is possible which is not in each step determinate *physiology*.'[22] An adequate analysis of cognition, Herder concludes, would therefore be 'Haller's physiological work raised to psychology.'[23]

A less ontologically reductive approach is the one put forth by another renowned 'anthropologist,' Ernst Platner. Considered among the founding

19 Bonnet, *Essai*, §771.

20 See Gary Hatfield, 'Remaking the Science of Mind: Psychology as a Natural Science,' in *Inventing Human Science* edited by Christopher Fox, Roy Porter, and Robert Wokler (eds.), (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), p. 206. For a reading of Bonnet as the founding father of neurophilosophy, see Harry A. *Whitaker* and Yves Turgeon Y, 'Charles Bonnet's Neurophilosophy' in *Brain, mind and medicine: Essays in Eighteenth Century Neuroscience*, edited by Harry Whitaker, C. U. M. Smith, Stanley Finger (New York: Springer 2007).

21 Zammito, 'Kant, Herder and the Birth,' p. 469 fn. 218 shows, for instance, that Kant himself targeted Bonnet when criticizing 'physiological anthropologies' in his 1772–3 *Lectures*. On the crucial influence of Bonnet in Germany see Paul Ziche, 'Anthropologie und Psychologie als Wissenschaften,' in Eckardt et al. 'Anthropologie und Psychologie,' pp. 73–132 and 194–5.

22 Herder, *Philosophical Writings*, edited by M. N. Forster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 191. Michael Forster correctly emphasizes that this is only one side of Herder, who on other occasions seems to have resisted physical reductivism and 'so would be reluctant to say that irritation is purely physiological and fully constitutes mental states. However, in the 1775 draft of On the Cognition, and even in some parts of the published version, this is his position,' Michael Forster, *After Herder, Philosophy of Language in the German Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2010), p. 28

23 Herder, *Philosophical Writings*, p. 196.

fathers of the discipline of medical anthropology, Platner notably sought to establish correlations between physiological and mental phenomena. According to the famous definition provided in his 1772 *Anthropology for Physicians and the Worldwise*, anthropology is meant to 'elucidate body and soul in their reciprocal relations, limitations and connections.'[24]

Platner adopted a methodological strategy analogous to Bonnet's: agnostic about the metaphysics of the soul, he grounded his analysis on observation, attempting to advance empirically significant claims regarding the connection between physiological events and cognitive ones. As for Bonnet, observation plays a key role in Platner's procedure. This is why Platner claims that his *Anthropology* will deal 'more with facts than with speculations'[25] and will proceed 'more *historisch* as *spekulativ*.'[26] Also like Bonnet, Platner is explicitly non-committal about the metaphysics of the soul-body relation. Yet, guided by an empirical approach, he states that 'my treatise will contain little psychology that cannot be brought back to physicalistic explanation.'[27] As such examples suggest, the conceptual space around Hegel was populated by naturalistic approaches to mind and cognition, which often appeared under the heading *anthropology*.[28]

11.2 Hegel and Naturalistic Approaches to Soul

Hegel was well acquainted with this tradition of approaches which, under the influence of French sensualism and the new discoveries in physiology, carried out the 'naturalization' of the human. Hegel owned Bonnet's text (Schütz's German translation), as well as the works of Schmid and Herder.[29]

What was his stance toward such approaches? On the one hand, in the *Philosophy of Nature* (and *Philosophy of Spirit*) Hegel notably claims that philosophy must proceed in accordance with the results of the empirical sciences. Consequently, his account of nature includes notions and findings drawn from various natural-scientific disciplines. The same is true his

24 Ernst Platner, *Anthropologie für Ärzte und Weltweise*. (Hildesheim: Olms 2000, Reprint from the 1772 edition) p. XIV, my transl.

25 Platner, 'Anthropologie,' p. XVIII, my transl.

26 Ibid., p. XXVI. This empirical approach, according to Platner, is what justifies his aphoristic and non-systematic writing style. On the role of 'observation' in the methodologies taken up in anthropology and psychology, see Matthias John and Temilo van Zantwikk, 'Zur Methodologie der Erfahrungsseelenlehre,' in 'Anthropologie und Psychologie' pp. 189–224.

27 Platner, 'Anthropologie,' p. XVII, my transl.

28 See the texts quoted in fn. 4.

29 At the same time, Hegel was familiar with the methodological criticism and defense of non-naturalistic philosophical approaches to cognition coming from Kant and Fichte. See Temilo Van Zantwijk and Paul Ziche, 'Fundamentalphilosophie oder empirische Psychologie? Das Selbst und die Wissenschaften bei Fichte und C. C. E. Schmid,' *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung*, 54/4, pp. 557–80.

treatment of 'sensibility' in the 'animal organism.' For Hegel, the animal organism can be described as a system of systems.[30] The text mentions three such constitutive systems: 'sensibility,' 'irritability' and 'reproduction.' These three systems form a functional unity that Hegel calls 'Gestalt,' through which each system is connected to each other.[31]

Hegel sees the three systems as in part autonomous: they can be conceptually and physically distinguished, at least in part, though not functionally separated. They have 'existencies of their own'[32]: each constitutes a 'totality that specifies itself' into various sub-systems and is associated with particular bodily functions and parts.[33] Sensibility, for instance, consisted in the 'system of bones' (*Knochensystem*) as well as the 'system of brain and nerves' (*Systeme des Gehirns und dessen weiterem Auseinandergehen in den Nerven*) and the 'system of the sympathetic nerves and ganglia' (*System … [der] sympathetischen Nerv mit den Ganglien*).[34]

To what extent can cognitive functions for Hegel be explained in terms of (or even correlated with) such physiological systems? Hegel clearly distinguished between the physiological (*Sensibilität*) and cognitive (*Empfindung*) parts of cognition. While he maintains that the former is fundamental to explaining the animal organism's biological relation to its environment, physiological sensibility does *not* play any substantial role in his account of cognition.[35] Indeed, as I will argue, for Hegel sensibility (*Sensibilität*) does

30 For an overview of Hegel's account of animal organism see Klaus Brinkmann, 'Hegel on The Animal Organism,' Laval théologique et philosophique, 52,1, pp. 135–53.

31 *Hegel's Philosophy of Nature,* edited by Michael John Petry, 3 vols. (London: Allen & Unwin; New York: Humanities Press, 1970. Henceforth EN) §352–3. For Hegel, the reproductive system incorporates 'sensibility' and 'irritability.' Reproduction 'is the reality and basis of the first two moments' (EN § 353). Here Hegel draws from a widespread tradition developed out of Haller's distinction. I will not dwell on it here, since it is not essential to my argument. For an acute reconstruction of Hegel's take on the nervous system, see Sebastian Rand, 'Subjetividade animal e o sistema nervoso na Filosofia da Natureza de Hegel,' in Revista Eletrônica Estudos Hegelianos, 7/12, 2010, pp. 32–51. For further analysis of the tradition Hegel draws from, see John H. Zammito, *The Gestation of German Biology, Philosophy and Physiology from Stahl to Schelling*, (Chicago-London: The University of Chicago Press, 2017).

32 PN §354A.

33 'Diese drei Momente sind jedes selbst Totalität,' Georg W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Natur: Nachschriften zu den Kollegien der Jahre 1825/26 und 1828*, edited by. Niklas Hebing. Henceforth [GW 24.2]), p. 278. For Hegel each moment 'besondert sich wieder in sich selber' (GW 24,2, p. 1150).

34 EN § 354.

35 On this point also see Stone, 'Petrified Intelligence,' p. 192. Hegel certainly recognizes the role that physiology (i.e. the system of sensibility) plays in sensation, but for him it represents only the material conditions for sensation and does not provide much insight into what sensation is ('The nerve is the condition under which sensation is present wherever the body is touched; similarly it is the condition of the will, and any self- determining purpose,' EN §354Z). As Rand argues ('Subjectividade animal'), Hegel claims that sensations are associated with a particular degree of functional organization. However, this leaves

not, and should not, have a primary position in a philosophical account of *Empfindung*.

This limited role for naturalistic considerations in explaining cognitive phenomena such as sensing is connected to Hegel's refusal to offer an analysis of cognition that proceeds from the 'bottom-up,' by empirically investigating the causal link between physiological processes and cognitive ones.

> Es kann den Missverstand veranlassen, als wenn der Geist so Produkt der Natur ist, wie es oft geschehen ist ihn anzusehen, daß man das Materielle, Sinnliche, Natürliche als das behauptet, was nur wahrhafte sei, real, während man dann den Geist ansieht als eine Kombination, ein Aggregat von natürlichen Tätigkeiten, Kräfte … so dass wenn solche sich nur verfeinern bis auf einen gewissen Grad das Geistige, das Bewusstsein entsteh.[36]

Interestingly enough, Hegel calls such a stance 'naturalism' (*Naturalismus*) and associates it with the Condillac-Bonnet tradition.

> Diese[r] Naturalismus, Materialismus, sieht das Geistige an, als ein bloß Hervorgebrachtes, als ein Resultat von Kombinationen, als ein Grad von Verfeinerung natürlicher Kräfte.[37]

Insofar as *philosophical* approaches to cognition are at stake, Hegel claims that such an emergentist stance cannot satisfactorily account for cognition. Hegel calls such an approach 'sogar ganz falsch.'[38]

His opposition has multiple origins. The first is that for Hegel naturalism is committed to an unjustified ontological assumption: reductive materialism. This assumption

> has given rise to the view that particular presentations are preserved in particular fibers and localities, it being assumed that what is variegated ought to have essentially only one and only a singularized spatial existence.[39]

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his account of the notion relatively empty and in need of further specification. In some passages, Hegel even denies a direct connection between physiological stimuli and sensation; there are cases in which stimulation does not give rise to any sensing episode. See *Hegel's Philosophy of Subjective Spirit*, edited by Michael Petry, (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1978 [Henceforth PS], §459.

36 Georg. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie des subjektiven Geistes*, edited by C. J. Bauer (Hamburg: Meiner 2008. [Henceforth GW, 25, 1]), p. 175.

37 Ibid.

38 Ibid. Hegel uses 'naturalism' in the same sense in GW, 25, 1, p. 213.

39 PS §453. Here the reference to Bonnet is quite explicit. On this point see Ziche, 'Psychologie und Anthropologie bei Hegel,' p. 178.

The other reason seems connected to the methodological requirements of a distinctively *philosophical* approach to *Geist*. On a methodological level, Hegel draws a sharp distinction between empirical approaches and philosophical ones: making such a distinction is crucial, especially when *Geist* is the object of investigation. Hegel in fact rejects all approaches to spirit based on *observation*. In his criticism of empirical psychology and anthropology, Hegel warns against investigating the spirit with a method based on collecting evidence and grouping together observations about particular cognitive performances based on their similarities. The resulting postulation of faculties – each linked to group of similar observations – results in an account of the mind as an 'aggregate' of faculties.

> The isolating of activities … involves treating spirit as nothing but an aggregation, and considering their relationship as an external and contingent relation.[40]

In the introduction to his 1822 *Lectures*, Hegel states that in a philosophical inquiry of mind 'empirical knowledge such as this one cannot be anymore part of philosophy,'[41]since 'the modes of observation…such as the ones of empirical psychology…proved to be insufficient.'[42] It seems that for Hegel, a *philosophical* analysis of cognition should follow an essentially different route and, as he states, employ different 'methods.'[43]

What then is the defining feature of an ideal philosophical methodology? Hegel's metaphilosophical observations in the *Philosophy of Spirit* show that he attaches great value to the idea of developing an account that shows a particular conceptual 'necessity' and opposes it to the contingency of the empirical approaches to mind using experience and observation: 'Insight into necessity and the comprehension of necessity are the task of philosophy. But experience signifies merely that something is.'[44]

For Hegel, a philosophical understanding of *spirit* must grow out of an argument that demonstrates conceptual necessity. In its analysis of cognition – from its basic forms (*Empfindung*) to higher levels (*Denken*) – 'die Philosophie fordert, dass die Nothwendigkeit des Geistes bewiesen wird.'[45]

Such passages suggest that Hegel thinks that philosophy comes to grasp with cognition in a way that is *logically* and *methodologically* different from natural scientific inquiry. Philosophy therefore should not build its analysis upon observation or draw from the findings of the empirical sciences. For

40 PS, §445.
41 GW, 25,1: 7
42 GW, 25,1, p. 160.
43 Ibid.
44 G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit (1827-8),* Translated by R. R. Williams, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007 [Henceforth LPS]), p. 62.
45 GW, 25,1, p. 164

Hegel, even adopting a more liberal naturalistic stance – rejecting materialist assumptions and accepting ontological pluralism – is insufficient for understanding spirit. His criticism of *observation* seems to constitute his method as an *alternative* to empirical anthropology, rather than an *extension* of it.

11.3 Hegel's Approach to Soul: Holism and the Transformative Structure of his Argument

One of the basic desiderata of Hegel's account is that it takes the form of an argument driven by conceptual necessity. This, however, does not say much about the structure of Hegel's argument itself.

To better understand it requires focus on another crucial feature of human cognition that Hegel repeatedly emphasizes and which shapes the way he builds his argument: that the presence of higher capacities shapes lower ones in a structurally relevant way, 'so that what is higher already shows itself to be empirically present in a lower more abstract determination.'[46] For Hegel each activity can be understood in its 'concrete' form only when placed within the broader context of a *fully developed* spirituality. This has to do with Hegel's understanding of *Geist* as a holistic unity.[47]

This transformative feature has important consequence for the structure of Hegel's account of cognitive activity (or groups of them), for it means that only at the end of the argument – once all spiritual activities have been conceptually deployed – can we properly grasp each cognitive faculty. Hegel recognized that presented expository difficulty, for in writing he had to consider *one* activity *after* another. To overcome this issue, he adopted the argumentative device he calls 'anticipation.' As Paul Ziche has noticed, 'anticipation' is a 'necessary methodological tool for a presentation of a philosophy of spirit.'[48] In order to provide examples, Hegel warns readers, he had to 'anticipate' and consider activities that would appear later in the argument.[49]

This confers upon the argument a very peculiar form: the introduction of each activity in the argument becomes provisional. Each notion awaits further (conceptually necessary) elaboration in various ways, as it gets supplemented by other activities and reshaped in a holistic context in which higher activities are at play. Consequently, it is only later in the argument that each activity gets conceptualized in its complete conceptual form. This

46 PS, §380.

47 I have defended a transformative reading of Hegel's account of spirit in Luca Corti, 'Hegel's Later Theory of Cognition: An Additive or Transformative Model?', *Hegel Bulletin*, forthcoming. There I present and defend in more detail some of the claims that follow.

48 Ziche, 'Psychologie und Anthropologie bei Hegel,' p. 180.

49 Cf. PS § 402Z, GW 25,1, p. 63, and LPS, p. 70: 'these lower stages I we have to anticipate a content that does not occur on these lower levels as such.'

kind of progressive 'reshaping' of each activity over the course of the argument is a core structural feature of the text and accounts for the numerous *repetitions* that have long puzzled scholars.

Take, for instance, *feeling*. After being introduced at the beginning of the *Anthropology*, the notion gets progressively rethought in the context of the more developed and comprehensive conception of subjectivity presented in the *Phenomenology* and then in the *Psychology*. This progressive redefinition is highlighted by Hegel himself, who flags for his reader that the proper account of feeling is the one provided by the *Psychology*:

> Although we have had to speak of *feeling* on two former occasions, in each case it was in a different relation. We had to consider it *first* in respect of the *soul,* ... At the standpoint of consciousness, mention was made of feeling a *second* time. There, however, the determinations of feeling were the material of consciousness, *separated* from the soul and appearing in the shape of an *independent object*.
>
> Now, in the *third* and final instance, feeling has the significance of being the initial form assumed by *spirit as such*, which constitutes the unity and truth of the *soul* and of *consciousness*.[50]

11.4 Hegel on Humans and Animals

The fact that higher forms reshape previous ones is particularly important because, as Terry Pinkard has noticed, a new, distinctively human kind of self-relation emerges over the course of Hegel's argument. In particular in the *Phenomenology,* as Pinkard states, we come to understand that

> The human animal … practically establishes a new type of self-relation that constitutes consciousness of an object and not merely an animal awareness of it.[51]

Given the nature of Hegel's argument and his holistic conception of spirit, this self-relation affects the nature of all already introduced cognitive elements, reshaping their definition. As Pinkard acknowledges, this means there is a difference in *kind* between the human and animal case that also affects each's basic form of relation with the world, i.e. sensation.[52]

50 PS, §446.

51 Terry Pinkard, *Hegel's Naturalism: Mind, Nature, and the Final Ends of Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 45.

52 For an argument in opposition to this view, see Stephen Houlgate, 'Thought and Experience in Hegel and McDowell,' European Journal of Philosophy 14/2, pp. 242–61 and Willem A. DeVries, 'Subjective Spirit. Soul, Consciousness, Intelligence and Will,' in *The*

Is there nonetheless a conceptual connection between human sensing and animal sensing? Or is 'sensation' simply the name for two different sorts of episodes in humans and animals – and if so, is there a justification for such homonymy?

Hegel seems to suggest that animal sensation is conceptually derivative of human sensation. Despite the fact that *Empfindung* is first mentioned in Hegel's account of the natural realm, in that context, as we have already noticed, the notion does not acquire much content and its correlation with determinate physiological occurrences is not definitional.[53] Rather, its content is left indeterminate; it will be become fully intelligible only in the *Philosophy of Spirit*, where, however, it will take the form of *human* sensation. Moreover, the examples that Hegel provides to explain and illuminate animal 'sensations' in the *Philosophy of Nature* are always *derivative* of the human, such that it seems we can conceptually make sense of the kind of cognitive relation the animal establishes with its environment only via analogical extension of the human one.

Similar considerations apply to Hegel's definition of 'soul': it is notably introduced in the *Philosophy of Nature* as the 'negative unity' of the body (as opposed to its functional differentiation). In this first definition, Hegel claims:

> Indem so die Seele die negative Einheit der Lebensunterschiede ist, ist sie das Idealisieren, das nur als Prozess existiert. Die Negativität des Leibes ist die Seele, allgegenwärtig im ganzen Leibe, ohne ein Vieles zu sein[54]

This understanding of the notion of 'soul' as a principle of unity is in line with the natural scientific research of the time.[55] However, the details about what such a form of unity precisely is – including its internal articulation and activities – are specified only within the *Philosophy of Spirit*. There Hegel's specification occurs in the context of a conceptual articulation of human cognitive capacities, the only domain that for Hegel is able to fill the notion of 'soul' with its relevant details.

Bloomsbury Companion to Hegel, edited by A. de Laurentiis, and J. Edwards (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), p 14.

For Hegel's claim that animals and humans do not sense in the same way, see PS, 102.

53 Hegel claims that the different functional systems in an animal organism 'produce' a unity called Empfindung ('Empfindung ist subjektive Einheit – das Thier fühlt etwas,' GW 24,2, p. 963)

54 GW, 24,2, p. 924–5.

55 Belief in the unity of the self was 'was axiomatic to physiologists including Hermann Boerhaave, Albrecht von Haller, Charles Bonnet, Georges Buffon, and ultimately P.-J.-G. Cabanis, J.-B. Lamarck, and Georges Cuvier,' Jessica Riskin, *Science in the Age of Sensibility: The Sentimental Empiricists of the French Enlightenment* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2002), p. 25.

Hegel's own statements seem to support that the *Philosophy of Spirit* be understood as conceptually preceding the *Philosophy of Nature*, at least in the case of *animal cognition*. Ultimately, Hegel maintains that the relevant features of lower animals are 'knowable only' (*erst erkennbar*) from the more fully conceptually developed case of the human animal, which Hegel calls 'the perfect animal' (*das volkommene Tier*). For Hegel, the human animal is the 'type' in which the cognitive processes are perfectly instantiated; it is so perfect in fact that it enables the identification and understanding of analogous features in lower animals. In Hegel's words, the processes

> Are developed in the fullest and clearest way in the human organism, which is the perfect animal. In general therefore, a universal type is present in this supreme organism, *and it is in and from this type that the significance of the undeveloped organism may first be ascertained and assessed*[56]

If some functions can be identified and become intelligible only by analogical extension from the 'perfect' human type, this seems to be especially the case for cognitive functions (which, as we have seen, should not be identified via observation in a natural scientific way but rather 'deduced' in a conceptual necessary argument).

Such a logically derivative character, stressed by Hegel himself, explains the presence of spiritual determinations in Hegel's *Philosophy of Nature*. It enables him to claim that the *Anthropology* retroactively sheds light on the *Philosophy of Nature*, making some structures introduced there intelligible.

Such a relation between the two parts of Hegel's system is, on the one hand, consistent with the idea that there is a relevant *difference* between the animal and human soul ('human animality is something totally different than mere animality.'[57]). On the other, it clarifies Bourgeois' puzzlement about 'homonymy' that I have mentioned at the beginning of this chapter: both are labelled 'soul' not because they are identical or because the first is part of the second, but rather because the conceptual relation between the two is such that the animal is derivative from the human case.

Finally, this way of understanding the argument is also consistent with Hegel's claim that the conceptual determinations of soul are *not* derived from observation or natural scientific inquiry – both strong evidence for not categorizing Hegel as a 'naturalist,' even in the broad sense introduced the first part of this paper.

56 PN §352Z, my emphasis.

57 Georg W. F. Hegel *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie des Geistes*, Edited by F. Hespe and B. Tuschling (Meiner: Hamburg, 1994), p. 35.

11.5 Conclusions

I began this article with an overview of the tradition of the 'naturalization of human,' focusing in particular on the new naturalistic approaches to 'soul' that were elaborated as part of the new disciplines of 'anthropology' and 'psychology' in Germany after the 1770s.

I demonstrated that Hegel – who was familiar with this tradition – took an interesting position in relation to it: on the one hand, he included empirical results from new scientific theories (including from physiology) in his account of the organism as a part of nature, adding that, at the level of the animal, functional organization gives rise to a higher unity called 'soul.' This seems to give a naturalistic flavor to his conception of cognition, especially in the animal case. On the other hand, however, as I have shown, Hegel's attack on 'observation' leads him to reject 'naturalistic' methodological assumptions and sketch a different philosophical method for the analysis of spiritual or cognitive features, including soul.

In the second part of the article, I focused on that methodology and on Hegel's transformative conception of spirit. This conception – together with the structure of Hegel's argument – suggest that human cognition is *essentially different* from animal cognition, because the so-called higher faculties reshape the nature of lower ones in important ways.

Finally, I have provided some arguments to support the idea that the activities of 'soul' and 'sensation' first introduced in the *Philosophy of Nature* become intelligible and identifiable only with reference to the *type* of human subjectivity developed in the *Philosophy of Spirit*. Hegel's own considerations on the human as the 'perfect animal' suggest that the philosophical analysis of cognition carried out in the *Philosophy of Spirit* can retrospectively illuminate – via analogical extension – the animal phenomena presented in the *Philosophy of Nature* (and not the other way around). Both the 'soul' and some of its activities, including sensation, become fully *intelligible* and acquire content only over the course of the *Philosophy of Spirit*. This is consistent with Hegel's own idea that his method for understanding cognition was more an *alternative* to naturalism that an extension of it.

12 Truth and Method in the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*

Joshua Wretzel

In the long story of the 20th century battle with Cartesianism, perhaps no theme has been more predominant, or recurred more frequently, than the connection between method and mind. From Ryle's category mistake, to Wittgenstein's picture that held us captive, to Rorty's mirror of nature, philosophers have traced their dissatisfaction with dualism to a fundamental meta-issue concerning our approach to the study of mind. These thinkers all held in common the view that the *problems* of Cartesianism could not be solved within the *logic* of Cartesianism, that there was something wrong with the Cartesian way of thinking that gave rise to these problems in the first place. Better, they thought, to leave the troublesome presuppositions of Cartesianism behind.

So expressed, there is something rather Hegelian about this revolt against Cartesianism. For there is no thinker in the Western world who has done more to demonstrate the way that problems within particular worldviews arise from the particular logics of those worldviews, and that the best way to solve those problems is to disavow that worldview and its troublesome logic. It should thus come as no surprise that, at the close of the last century, philosophers of mind started to employ Hegel in these disavowals of Cartesianism. There is, however, *an important difference between the two*: these 20th-century thinkers held that the choice of method was largely a psychological or extra-philosophical affair: faced with all of the problems that Cartesianism poses, one reaches a point where it becomes preferable simply to leave Cartesianism behind and seek out better options elsewhere. For lack of a better expression, disavowing Cartesianism becomes a way of making one's job easier. Hegel, on the other hand, thinks we can provide philosophical demonstrations of the inadequacies of dualistic modes of thought. Employing what is variously known as his dialectic or immanent critique, he thinks he can show how dualistic thinking fails on its own terms, and thus must be disavowed for purely rational reasons. Moreover, by means of what he calls determinate negation, he thinks he can show how the true, non-dualistic mode of thinking arises from out of the ruins of dualism.

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The method that results from this connection between critique and solution, dialectic and determinate negation, is the source of much criticism of Hegel. Thought of as an interpretive device that one applies to philosophical problems, it is not uncommon for critics to think of it as the means by which Hegel totalizes all reality, stultifies or mechanizes thinking, or builds the excessive and extravagant metaphysical structures for which he has become infamous. Such a view has been unsuccessful in gaining traction even amongst those contemporary sympathizers with Hegel. Indeed, the core figures behind Hegel's resurgence either emphasize certain, specific elements of the broader system, or they de-emphasize Hegel's various claims about the methodological underpinnings of the system, or they simply deny that there is any such method to be found. Such a view tends, therefore, towards an uncomfortable dilemma in Hegel studies: one must, it seems, either choose to maximize Hegel's contemporary relevance at the cost of its method, or one must choose interpretive accuracy and forego attempts to determine Hegel's contemporary relevance.

My aim in this paper is to make an initial foray into overcoming the dilemma. I shall argue that an understanding of Hegel's method is central to an understanding of the radical and relevant insights of Hegel's philosophy of mind. I contend that, in order to articulate his conception of mind, Hegel had to innovate upon existing philosophical methodologies, bringing so-called transcendental philosophy to its apotheosis. Following Franks (2005), we shall examine the career of transcendental argumentation in classical German philosophy. We shall then see how Hegel, at a decisive point in the *Encyclopedia Philosophy of Spirit*, breaks with these earlier methods: none of the available modes of transcendental argumentation, Hegel thinks, are sensitive enough to the phenomena of mind to adequately account for them. I thus show how Hegel's innovative method does not *stultify* thought about the mind, but rather frees it so that the mind may be thought *as* mind. I analyze a key passage of the text – the *Anmerkung* to §445 – to show how Hegel in fact criticizes other approaches to mind for their insensitivity to the phenomena of mind.

12.1 Hegel's Method

It is possible to interpret Hegel's *Encyclopedia* as a doctrine of philosophical method. Taking as its task the articulation of the highest truth – the so-called 'absolute idea' – it examines a long series of increasingly complex, methodological approaches to its articulation. The series culminates in the full articulation of the fully adequate method, which turns out to be the method underlying and guiding the progressive series itself. The absolute idea is, thus, the method of methods, a method occurring at a higher order, 'visible' only from a broader valence, what we may call the *standpoint* of the absolute.

So described, this interpretive approach is, of course, hardly original. In fact, it is not entirely uncommon for Hegel to be criticized for his

thoroughgoing, methodical approach to philosophy. It is the means by which Hegel totalizes all reality, stultifies and mechanizes thinking, or builds the excessive and extravagant metaphysical structures for which he has become infamous. And after two centuries of sustained attack, there is little to nothing that remains in contemporary philosophy concerning the viability of Hegel's philosophical method. Indeed, even Hegel's resurgence in the Anglo-American tradition either emphasizes certain, specific elements of the broader system, or de-emphasizes Hegel's various claims about the methodological underpinnings of the system, or else simply denies that there is any such method to be found.

To be sure, such denials are not unreasonable. This is because, for all his claims about the one, true, philosophical method, there is much in Hegel that seems to counteract them. Not only are there schematic difficulties – e.g. difficulties accounting for specific dialectical transitions at key moments in his works – but there is much in what Hegel says about philosophical practice, generally, that seems to speak against the rigors of strict adherence to a methodology. For instance, in §23, he writes:

> thinking is true in terms of its content only if it is immersed in the *basic matter* at hand and in terms of form only if it is not a *particular* instance of being or doing of the subject, but instead is consciousness conducting itself as an abstract 'I,' *liberated* from *all the particularity* that attaches to qualities and conditions otherwise … [T]he worthiness which consciousness bestows upon itself consists precisely in letting go of its *particular* beliefs and opinions and letting the *basic matter* hold sway in itself.
>
> (§23 Anm., 57)

And then again, in §42 z.:

> Human beings' striving is directed generally at knowing the world, appropriating and submitting it to their will, and towards this end the reality of the world must be crushed, that is, idealized. At the same time, however, it needs to be noted that it is *not* [my emphasis] the subjective activity of self-consciousness that introduces absolute unity into the manifoldness. This identity is, rather, the absolute, the true itself. It is, so to speak, the benevolence of the absolute to release the individualities to their self-enjoyment, and this absolute drives them back into the absolute unity.
>
> (§42 z1., 86–7)

That is, Hegel everywhere emphasizes a *freedom* at work in all thinking, one that must let go of whatever attitudes or presuppositions one may hold about the way things are, and thereby allows the truth of the matter come to light. When he speaks about *letting* the matter hold sway, or

the destructiveness of the appropriating, idealizing activity, or the way one, from the standpoint of the absolute, 'releases' individualities to their 'self-enjoyment,' he does, indeed, seem to be criticizing the very methodological approach others associate with *him*. Indeed, one finds in such passages the foundations of Heideggerian *Gelassenheit* and Gadamerian 'sensitivity to the alterity of the text,' ideas which served, in their own time, as counter-weights to those in the field of hermeneutics who were advancing rigorous methodological approaches of their own.

But if it is reasonable to disavow, or at least downplay, the presence of philosophical methodology in Hegel, it nevertheless cannot be the definitive view on the matter. Practically the first thing Hegel says in the preface to the *Encyclopedia* is that this work 'sets up a new reworking of philosophy according *to a method* [my emphasis] that will someday be recognized, I hope, *as the only true method* [my emphasis] …' (5). It simply cannot be right to speak of Hegelian '*seinlassen*' without also acknowledging his self-proclaimed adherence to a particular philosophical methodology. Getting Hegel right requires that we reconcile the two, seemingly divergent, attitudes.

In order to effect that reconciliation, though, we must first recognize that Hegel has a somewhat unique sense of the term in mind when he calls his approach a method. Again in the Heidelberg preface, Hegel claims:

> the methodical character of the progression is sufficiently distinct from the merely *external order* that the other sciences look for, as well as from a *mannerism* that has become customary in treating philosophical objects. This mannerism *presupposes a schema* and in the process sets up parallels among the materials just as externally as – and even more arbitrarily than – the first way [i.e. that of the sciences] does.
>
> (51)

Hegel's is precisely *not* the sort of method that would determine in advance a particular mode of thinking or inferential process, and then conform all phenomena to that predetermined structure. We misread Hegel if and when we think of his methodology in these terms. Rather, I would like to suggest – and think there is compelling evidence to argue – that Hegel adheres to a view that we may call 'methodological realism.' He believes that there is a process alive within the way things are that is only articulable in terms of a method. There *really are* dialectical structures, contradictions that must resolve themselves, logical connections between different sorts of entities. The philosopher, therefore, articulates things according to a methodological progression simply by allowing that methodology alive within things to show itself to us.

I admit that such a view might, at first glance, seem strange. But I do not think it is so far-fetched, or presents a stark deviation from views commonly accepted and defended in contemporary metaphysics. For as we shall see, the method that Hegel articulates is a broadly transcendental one. Now to

be sure, I understand the term 'transcendental' according to a broad construal, one defended in the works of Paul Franks (2005), as opposed to one defended by P. F. Strawson or Charles Taylor. What he means is that one's reasonings involve conditions and things conditioned by them, and that there is some claim to a necessary connection between the two. So described, a methodological realism would not, I think, be wildly different than some forms of *modal* realism that have come to prominence in the contemporary landscape.

In what follows, I shall defend a methodological realist interpretation of the section on theoretical mind in the *Encyclopedia Philosophy of Spirit*. I argue that Hegel there follows a method that is distinct from – and in fact critical of – the transcendental approach that Taylor attributes to him in the Jena *PhG*, and that it even marks an advance over other transcendental approaches that central figures in the German tradition employ. But most centrally, I wish to argue that there is a *connection* between the transcendental mode of exposition and theoretical mind itself. For the method Hegel describes is a *circular* one, with the various parts of theoretical mind reciprocally conditioning and being conditioned by the others. In this way, the self-propulsion of the exposition mimics the self-determination of theoretical mind itself.

My central motivation in developing the thesis of methodological realism is to apply it to the section on theoretical mind in Hegel's philosophy of subjective spirit. Elucidating some of its central passages in methodological terms will, I argue, illuminate an original and compelling account of mental activity at work within Hegel's thought.

12.2 Hegel's Mind

Let us turn, now, to the topic of mind in Hegel. I take as a point of departure a passage from the remark to §445, where Hegel sets up a particular approach to philosophy of mind as *foil* to his own account:

> A favorite reflexion-form is that of *powers* and *faculties* of *soul*, intelligence, or mind. The *faculty*, like the *power* [*Kraft*], is the *fixed determinacy of a content*, represented as reflection-into-itself. The power (§136) is indeed the *infinity* of form, of the inner and the outer, but its essential *finitude* involves the *indifference* of *content* to form (ibid., Remark)
>
> (§445, Anm, 173)

Put simply, Hegel finds it problematic to demonstrate the functioning of the mind in terms of 'forces' and 'expressions,' a common method of natural scientific inquiry in his day. When applied to a study of mind, Hegel claims, one equates the various faculties of the mind with forces: 'the *faculty*, like the *force*, is the *fixed determinacy of a content*, represented as

reflection-into-itself.' The explanation moves from a certain determinate mental content as *expression* to an underlying faculty as conditioning *force*. In this way, the faculty as force provides the underlying condition for the possibility of the mental content as expression.

The specific problem Hegel finds with this framework concerns what he calls an 'essential *finitude* [which] involves the *indifference* of *content* to form.' The terms 'finitude' and 'indifference' express Hegel's central concern about the fundamental, underlying presupposition of the force-expression framework: that parts of a whole are mutually unrelated, both to each other and to the whole. It is thus poorly suited as an approach to the study of mind, where Hegel thinks a different relationship between parts and wholes obtains.

We shall elaborate upon that structure of the mind below. For the moment, let us further examine the failings of the force-expression framework, by following his citation, in the above passage, to §136 of the *Encyclopedia Logic*. That paragraph, where Hegel explicitly thematizes the force-expression framework, comes in the second part of the *Logic*, the 'doctrine of Essence.' It lies in the subsection 'relationship,' within the broader section on 'appearance.' Broadly, the doctrine of essence addresses a metaphysical dualism between things and their underlying, as it were invisible properties, without which the things would not be what they are. In the realm of appearance, the thing is what appears, and there is some as it were invisible 'reality' underlying the appearance by virtue of which the appearing thing appears as it does. The subsection on 'relationship' posits that the appearance stands to what underlies it as a whole to its parts. The force-expression relationship posits that the relationship between whole and parts is 'mediated' by *forces*, of which the whole is the visible *expression*. It posits that there are two kinds of mediating forces: *attractive* forces that *bind* the parts together to constitute the whole, and *repulsive* forces that *repel* determinate wholes from other determinate wholes. In this way, we could consider, say, a tree as an expression of forces: we would then say that the composite object, 'tree,' is explicable as a manifestation of attractive forces binding different 'tree-atoms' together, and repulsive forces that push 'non-tree' atoms away from the tree atoms.

He argues that one who employs this framework ends up reasoning towards one of three ultimately dissatisfying results:

1. Since force only manifests itself by *expressing* itself, force is not really *distinct* from its expression. But force is supposed to *explain* expression as that which underlies it. So any attempt to explain expressions in terms of forces will just return us to the expression itself.
2. Even if we *were* able to explain expressions in terms of forces, this would not constitute a satisfactory point of termination of our explanation: the force is not an unconditioned, but is, itself, conditioned by something further. Hegel notes that those employing force-expression

forms of explanation regularly claim that forces are not self-subsisting, but inhere in other substances: 'thus, for example, magnetic force, as is well-known, is borne especially by iron whose other properties (color, specific weight, relationship to acids, and so forth) are independent of this relationship to magnetism' (§136 z., 205).

3. Even if forces *were* self-subsistent in this way, they would not be satisfactory explanatory termina because forces are, themselves, *causally* conditioned. Hegel argues that force-expression forms of explanation hold that forces are not self-causing, but are themselves caused by *other*, so-called 'soliciting' forces. Ultimately, then, one ends up in a regress of forces and their solicitations, or forces and other forces.

In other words, Hegel shows that force-expression explanations are vulnerable to skeptical, Agrippan-style challenges (which were especially present to the minds of philosophers at that time[1]): the relationship between force and its manifestation in expression compels the explainer to reason in a vicious circle; the conditioning of forces in matter creates an arbitrary terminus, since the conditioning matters are themselves conditioned; and the causal conditioning of forces creates a regress, in which conditioning forces are being conditioned by other forces, which are themselves conditioned by other forces in turn.

For our purposes, the regression of forces as conditions proves especially important. As Hegel notes, the regress of forces occurs because of what he calls the 'finitude' or limitations of force. Due to these limitations,

> The force is thus in need of solicitation from without; it acts blindly, and, thanks to this deficiency of the form, the content is also limited and contingent. It is not yet truly identical with the form, is not yet the concept and purpose that is the determinate in and for itself. This difference is supremely essential, but not easy to grasp; it has to be determined more precisely and only in terms of the concept of purpose. If it is overlooked, this leads to the confusion of construing God as force, a confusion from which Herder's God suffers especially
>
> (§136 Anm., 204)

There is nothing *about* the force, no inherent or intrinsic property of it, that makes it into the sort of force it is. Thus it is largely a matter of *circumstance*, the external conditions surrounding the force, that determine it as the sort of force it is. Now to be sure, these surrounding conditions *only* largely determine the force: it does have an internal determination *as force* (as opposed, say, to its determination as matter or expression), and so has an advantage over other, simpler explanatory forms (say, that of the

1 See Franks, 2005.

'immediate' part-whole relationship that precedes it). Still, the problem is that its determination *as force* is not yet metaphysically robust enough in constitution for it to provide a satisfactory point of terminus of conditions. And yet it is *supposed* to provide that point of terminus. So even though it must rely on something other than itself, there is, according to this framework, nothing simpler or more basic upon which it may rely. Thus one must posit the existence of other forces, external to the conditioning one, that make the relevant force do what it does. Since the conditioning force is just as indeterminate as what it explains, it must *also* rely on something other than itself … and so on.

Thus, in the passage from §445, Hegel's objection to the application of a force-expression explanatory method to the mind *specifically* concerns both the relationship between parts and wholes *and* the rather feeble metaphysical structure of forces. Accordingly, were we to begin from the presupposition of the mutual externality of forces to one another, we would end up characterizing the mind merely 'as an assemblage of *forces*' and so as 'an ossified mechanical *collection*' (§445 Anm., 173). That is, the method would be inadequate to articulate the sort of unity adequate to the mind, on the one hand, and would be too 'abstract' in structure to account for the specific functioning of the mental faculties, on the other.

Hegel's methodological observations on force and expression are further striking for the resemblance the method bears to one commonly attributed to Hegel: the *transcendental* one Taylor (1972) finds in the chapter on 'Consciousness' in the Jena *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Here is Taylor's depiction of it:

> By 'transcendental arguments' I mean arguments that start from some putatively undeniable facet of our experience in order to conclude that our experience must have certain features or be of a certain type, for otherwise this undeniable facet could not be.
>
> (1972, 151)

So described, the force-expression framework begins from the same point, and draws its inferences in the same fashion as Taylor describes. One does not begin with a question about the existence of expressions, but rather seeks an account of *why* these expressions are the way they are. It seeks out underlying conditions it calls 'forces' in order to do so. Thus, expressions bear analogy to Taylor's 'putatively undeniable facets' of experience, and forces bear analogy to the underlying 'features' that make that experience possible. Of course, the difference is that force-expression accounts seek underlying conditions for *entities* being the way they are, whereas Taylor's form of argument, again, addresses the structure of experience and its underlying conditions. However, the inferential connection between condition and conditioned is the same in each case. And in the remark to §445, Hegel *does* gesture toward the view that the force-expression framework,

when applied to provide an account of mind, creates just such a dynamic between components of experience and their underlying conditions. In this case, we are supposed to reason from the 'putatively undeniable fact' of some subjectively experienced, mental content as an expression, to some underlying faculty as a force conditioning that content. In this way, Hegel's critique of the force-expression framework in §136 doubles as a critique of a (certain sort of[2]) transcendental account of mind.

Hegel's point is subtle, here, but it bears emphasizing that his critique mirrors and anticipates Gadamer's persistent concerns over hermeneutics and application. For the central issue concerns the adequacy of a particular *mode of* inquiry to the *subject matter of* inquiry and calls into question those instances where the practice of application is insufficiently sensitive to the unique structure of the matter itself. In those instances, what obtains is akin to Heideggerian *in-sistence*, clinging to an established mode of inquiry, come what may: one ends up, as a result, *distorting* the structure of the things themselves for thought, so that it may better fit the particular mode of inquiry. One fails to *let beings be*, or in Hegel's words, to '[let] go of one's *particular* beliefs and opinions and [let] the *basic matter* hold sway in itself.'

When it comes to the study of mind, applying the force-expression framework as a mode of inquiry requires that one take each individual content-type to correspond to a distinct, underlying mental activity/faculty – e.g. intuitings to intuition, imaginings to imagination, etc. – separable and distinguishable from all the others. Hegel thinks this distorts the structure of mind in two fundamental respects. First, it alters the sort of holistic picture of cognition Hegel finds in the mind. Now it bears mentioning that the sort of holism of which Hegel speaks is different, broader in scope, than the conceptual holism of which contemporary commentators speak. He means that there is a kind of dependence relation that exists between mental contents that makes each of the content-types stand to epistemic contents (knowledge-claims, say) as part to whole. But it is a mistake, Hegel thinks, to think that we can analyze the whole into its individual parts, and from that atomized perspective, somehow piece the whole back together. That obscures both the sort of holistic relationship that obtains within epistemic contents and the activity of mind that underlies and constitutes them.

Second, Hegel endorses a teleological conception of mental activity, and the force-expression framework cannot accommodate any sort of teleological explanation at all. For it belongs, broadly, to the class of mechanistic modes of inquiry, which only yield explanations of *externally* purposive phenomena: in other words, the thing being explained becomes what it is by means of some external activity acting upon it. By contrast, teleological explanations employ an *internal* purposiveness, according to which the explanandum sets its own ends, and undertakes processes of self-activity in

2 This qualification will prove especially important in light of what follows, below.

order to meet those ends. There is, for this reason, a language of impulse, or urge, and desire that figures prominently in these explanations, but cannot be accounted for in mechanistic ones (like force-expression explanations). So when Hegel says, for instance, in §443 z., that 'in theoretical mind the impulse to *know* is dominant, the craving for *information*,' (§443 z. 170, emphases in original), he is signaling a *conative* approach to mind that will explain its activity in those terms.

Beyond the particular failings of the force-expression account, then, Hegel finds problematic its broader conformity to mechanistic frameworks. But to take up, once again, the thread on transcendental approaches to mind, one ought not to conclude from this that Hegel is opposed to applying a transcendental methodology, of a sort, to the study of the mind. In other words, it is possible to read Hegel's critique of the force-expression framework as a critique of *a particular kind* of transcendental argument, or that one may construe the notion of a transcendental argument more broadly than thinkers and commentators traditionally have. Specifically, Franks (2005) has argued that the kind of transcendental argument of which Taylor speaks is too restrictive to sufficiently account for the many ways the German idealists employ some form of this argumentative approach. For one, this definition only allows for transcendental arguments concerning subjective structures of experience, while German idealists will employ transcendental arguments not only to demonstrate the conditions for the possibility of experience, but also the *actuality* of that experience as well. As Franks notes, the post-Kantians see the Kantian system as vulnerable to a deeper kind of skeptical challenge than Kant, himself, had realized. Focusing centrally on mathematics and the natural sciences, Franks writes that 'For Kant, … experience [so conceived] may be presupposed as an actual *factum* in light of the success of Newtonian physics' (205). The post-Kantians, facing Spinozism, nihilism and Maimonian skepticism, found themselves combating a skepticism that reached beyond the realm of the sciences: the Kantian appeal to experience as *Factum* was not available to them.

For another, this definition counts as transcendental only those arguments that *regress* from some grounded to its conditioning ground. But the German idealists, Franks notes, also employ arguments that *progress* from the ground to a grounded. So for instance, while Fichte criticizes Reinhold's moving from facts to the foundation of those facts – the regressive method of the 'standard' definition – he claims that Reinhold's so-called 'fact of consciousness' is actually derivable from his *own*, true foundation, and that the method of the *Wissenschaftslehre proceeds* to a demonstration of conditioned facts on that basis:

> The *Wissenschaftslehre* [moves from] the ultimate foundation, which it possesses, to the things which are based upon this foundation: from the absolute to the conditioned elements contained within the absolute – that is, to the actual, true facts of consciousness.
>
> ((1964 -), I/3: 264)

That is, Franks shows that there are transcendental arguments where the founding conditions are in some sense homogeneous to the things they are conditions for, and transcendental arguments where the conditions are *heterogeneous* to the conditioned. Unsurprisingly, he calls the former *homogeneous*, the latter *heterogeneous* transcendental arguments. Once again, we can turn to Fichte's first principle as evidence of the distinction. In his *Aenesidemus* review, he writes:

> The subject and object do indeed have to be thought of as preceding representation, but not in consciousness qua an empirical mental state … The absolute subject, the I, is not given by empirical intuition; it is instead, posited by intellectual intuition.
>
> (1964- RAI/2: 47)

As long as we remain in the empirical realm, we may reason only from one spatio-temporally conditioned object to another, *ad infinitum*: no single thing found in this realm provides any better grounding than any other, and so leads us only further along the chain of the regress of reasons. Even the intuition of the 'I' given in this realm is subject to a kind of regress. In the *Novo Methodo*, he writes:

> Hitherto, people reasoned as follows: we cannot be conscious of things posited in opposition to us, that is, of external objects, unless we are conscious of ourselves, i.e. unless we are an object for ourselves. This occurs by means of an act of our own consciousness, of which we are able to become conscious only insofar as we, in turn, think of ourselves as an object and thereby obtain a consciousness of our own consciousness. But we become conscious of this consciousness of our consciousness only by, once again, turning it into an object and thereby obtaining a consciousness of the consciousness of our consciousness, and so on *ad infinitum*. Our consciousness, however, would never be explained in this manner
>
> (*WLnm*, IV 2, 30)

Fichte's claim is that the empirical consciousness of our consciousness is, itself, just another empirical consciousness, and is no more a conditioning ground of consciousness than any other consciousness. The problem, as Fichte sees it, is specifically this: that *every* empirically given consciousness presupposes something that cannot be given in *any* empirical consciousness. Thus, Fichte claims, again, that 'one is never conscious of the *absolute* subject … or of the *absolute* object' and that 'the absolute subject, the I, is not given by empirical intuition' but rather 'posited by intellectual intuition' (RA, I/2:47). So Fichte's point about the first principle, the absolute 'I,' is that it cannot find root in the series of empirical conditions, but must, as ground or condition, itself be somehow heterogeneous to that which it grounds.

Given this variety in forms of transcendental arguments, Franks suggests, with 'deliberate generality,' that a transcendental argument 'should issue in some *conditional* to the effect that some *conditioned* would be impossible, if not for some *condition*' (204). This is where we understand the *conditional* as {making a claim to necessity}, the *conditioned* as {some facet of either scientific or everyday experience to which a first personal possessive always attaches (however implicitly)} and the *condition* as either heterogeneous or homogeneous to the series of things conditioned. Finally, we may understand these arguments as either retrogressive, moving from thing conditioned to underlying condition; or progressive, moving from conditions to things conditioned.

These methodological insights allow us to analyze Hegel's account of mind in a way that illuminates its broadly transcendental structure. Hegel does hold, broadly, that there are intuited mental contents, and that there is some underlying activity of the mind that conditions those contents. But this is neither the most profound nor the most methodologically relevant sense in which Hegel's approach counts as transcendental. For one, while this relationship describes a regressive movement from conditioned to condition, Hegel's exposition of mind also accommodates and emphasizes a *progression* from condition to thing conditioned. And for another, Hegel's contrasting, progressive approach shifts the point of emphasis away from the relation between mental contents and their corresponding activities. Instead, he treats as basic, here, the impulse to know of which we spoke above, and thinks of this as the fundamental *condition* upon which mental activity and the production of mental contents both rest. This shift in methodology reveals a shift in the structure and activity of mind as well. For Hegel does not simply rearrange the collection of faculties one assembles in a force-expression account, and add a teleological, conative bent to them. Rather, he replaces all the various faculties of mind with a *single* one he calls 'the Intelligence' (*der Intelligenz*). He then shows how the various contents of mind are all products of the intelligence operating at varying levels of sophistication. Thus, in sum, the transcendental argument at the root of theoretical mind treats the impulse to know as a condition underlying the activity of the intelligence, which is itself a condition underlying the production of mental contents.

Of course, it is initially no clearer how the conative foundation of mind in impulse avoids the same, Agrippan concerns that befall the force-expression approach. What reason have we to take *this* to be the point from which an exposition of the mind must progress? Are we not to look behind the condition, to see how or whether impulse stands in relation to other, simpler conditions? Indeed, Hegel's answer seems, initially, unpromising: for he holds that mental contents provide the condition for the impulse. And since the intelligence provides the condition for the contents, and the impulse provides the condition for the intelligence, we find ourselves moving round in a circle, and so (at least apparently) susceptible to the charge

of circularity. On the other hand, we know well the claims Hegel makes about the virtuous circularity of the *Encyclopedia* system. The appearance of vicious circularity, then, could only be because we are viewing the relationship between conditions and things conditioned from a limited perspective. When we deepen or broaden our perspective on it, we see that the circularity describes a self-developmental *process*, where various points on the circle – impulse, intelligence, content – recur in ever more sophisticated forms, and that that sophistication is a result of the activity of the other points. For instance, contents condition the impulse to know precisely because each content-type is, in a crucial sense, incomplete. Hegel writes:

> Intelligence fills itself with the object given to it, which, precisely on account of its immediacy, is burdened with all the contingency, nullity, and untruth of external reality. But intelligence, far from confining itself to merely accepting the immediately presented content of objects, purifies the object of that in it which shows itself to be purely external, to be contingent and null.
>
> (§445 z., 175)

The object, as it is given to theoretical mind, is not yet known. It belongs to the activity of the intelligence to *develop* the given content into knowledge. But this transformation does not result from a single iteration of 'intelligent' activity. Initially, that is only the transformation from sense-contents ('feeling') into an intuition.

This transformation, however, fails to satisfy the impulse to know. Among other things, the impulse demands a *universality* of content, and the moment of intuition only presents the 'mere' spatio-temporality of the object, its 'hereness' and 'nowness' in *this* instance. So in order to satisfy the urge, the intelligence must *universalize* this intuition: as Hegel says, it must 'liberate [it] from its initial immediacy … [and receive it] into the universality of the I in general' (§452, 186). But this activity is not a matter of taking the intuited content-type and applying another, distinct activity to it. The intelligence 'finds' this flaw within the content-type itself, and, thinking it through, *develops* it into another content-type. Nor is this merely a development of a content-type by a fully constituted intelligence operating on it. Hegel writes:

> intelligence … is posited as that form of mind in which the mind itself alters the object and by the development also develops itself to truth … Thus intelligence removes the form of contingency from the object, grasps its rational nature and so posits it as subjective; and, conversely, in this way it at the same time cultivates subjectivity into the form of objective rationality.
>
> (§445 z., 175)

Thus, in fact, the intelligent development of the content *requires*, as condition for its possibility, the development of the intelligence itself. This is because Hegel sees a parallel between the epistemic limitations of a content-type and the cognitive limitations of the intelligence at a particular phase of development. For instance, Hegel claims,

> At the standpoint of mere *intuition* we are *outside ourselves*, in spatiality and temporality, these two forms of *asunderness*. Here intelligence is *immersed* in the external material, is one with it, and has no other content than that of the intuited object
>
> (§450 z., 184)

Here the parallel is between the manifoldness of the intuited content and the manifoldness of the intelligence. Hegel adds, 'But intelligence is the *dialectic* of this immediate asunderness, a dialectic that is *for itself*.' Thus, the intelligence must develop itself as a condition for the possibility of developing the content. Its dissatisfaction with the manifoldness of the content mirrors a dissatisfaction with its own manifoldness: this is what Hegel means when he speaks of our being '*outside ourselves*' in our 'asunderness.' Breaking free from its 'immersion,' the intelligence recognizes that *this* 'I,' here and now is indistinct from *this* I, *here* and *now*. It thereby combines the various 'heres' and 'nows' of the I, constituting the one, universal 'I' in thought.

This is the process through which the intelligence constitutes the 'faculty' of representation. Hegel writes, 'only when I make the reflection that it is I who have the intuition, only then do I occupy the standpoint of representation.' (§449 z., 182). Thus, as a condition for the possibility of producing representational content, the I must first constitute itself representationally.

Now for some methodological reflections. Note, first, how the relationships between content-types and mental faculties/activities differ between the force-expression account and this one. In this instance, the new content-type (representation) develops from out of reflection on the old one (intuition). There is an irrationality *inherent* to the intuited content that the intelligent reflection sets out to solve. It corrects for that irrationality, not by calling another mental faculty into action, but by developing a capacity, within itself, to correct for it. In other words, the dialectical progression from intuition to representation does not merely deduce the necessity of some faculty lying within the structure of the knowing mind, but traces the process by means of which the knowing mind constitutes itself. Hegel is making explicit the rational structure that lies implicit within the mind itself.

This is why, for one, Hegel does not wish to speak about the various faculties of the mind, but thinks of them all merely as the functioning of the intelligence at varying levels of sophistication. What makes representation possible is not a distinct faculty of the mind dedicated to the task of subsuming the manifold of intuition, but an ability to *think through* the irrationality

of intuition. In this way, theoretical cognition is perhaps better described in terms of habits or practices than in terms of faculties: intelligence develops the capacity to develop variously sophisticated content-types. So Hegel says that, in theoretical mind,

> the formal knowledge of certainty *elevates itself* [my emphasis] … to determinate and conceptual knowledge. The course of this elevation *is itself rational* [my emphasis], and consists in a necessary transition … of one determination of intelligent activity (a so-called *faculty* of mind) into another.
>
> (§445, 173)

We have interpreted Hegel's critique of the force-expression account of mind as a critique of a particular methodological approach to mind, one that mimics a transcendental approach that interpreters have ascribed to Hegel himself. We then argued, with Franks, that Hegel's account of mind does not need to conform to that structure in order to count as transcendental. But now it turns out that Hegel's transcendental method is not even neatly characterized according to Franks' broader determinations. In particular, recall that Franks said that all transcendental arguments are either retrogressive, moving from things conditioned to underlying conditions, or progressive, moving from conditions to things conditioned. Hegel, we said, *emphasizes* the progressive method, but in fact, it is *only* an emphasis. Hegel's arguments, he says, may be read forwards *or* backwards, and this corresponds to a methodological flexibility, according to which his arguments are *both* progressive and regressive. This follows from what we have called the *circularity* of Hegel's transcendental methodology. In the instance of theoretical mind, which we have examined here, the circularity manifests itself in the way the various parts of the mind both condition, and are conditioned by, each other. In this case, there are three central elements: the impulse to know, the content, and the intelligence. The role they play, transcendentally, depends upon the phase of development Hegel is depicting. For instance, if we begin with a study of intuition, then the intuition as content is conditioned by the intelligence, which is itself conditioned by the impulse to know. But it almost defines intuition to be dissatisfying to one who wishes to know; thus Hegel speaks of intuition in terms of 'awe' and 'wonder' (§449 z., 183). Once this comes into focus, intuition becomes a condition for the impulse to know which, itself, incites the intelligence into action: for the impulse to know is nothing other than a call for rational reflection upon some matter, a sense that there is something more to be known about it. But this rational reflection is just the process by means of which the intelligence develops the intuition into a representation. Here, then, the intelligence once again becomes the condition for the content, and the ultimate inadequacy of this content-type conditions the impulse to know. And so on.

13 Objective *Geist* Today

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It is beyond doubt that Hegel invented the term 'objective *Geist*' [*objektiver Geist*]. It can be found for the first time in §§s 304 and 400 of the Heidelberg *Encyclopedia*. In fact, if one disregards two mentions in the *Outlines of the Philosophy of Right* (in the comments on §§ 71 and 258), it can only be found in this context. This constitutes an interesting fact in itself: for Hegel, the concept of 'objective *Geist*' is only meaningful through its juxtaposition with that of 'subjective *Geist*,' and both, as forms of the finite *Geist,* are afflicted with an 'inappropriateness of concept and reality' and define themselves through their juxtaposition with that of the infinite, absolute *Geist*.[1] The addition to §385 of the *Encyclopedia* gives a more detailed definition of the relationship of those three moments of *Geist*. As arising from nature, subjective *Geist* is 'in relation to itself as to another'; with objective *Geist*, the freedom and the knowledge that *Geist* has of its freedom are given an 'external reality'; but by 'releasing the world from *Geist*,' finite (subjective as well as objective) *Geist* rises to the infinity of absolute *Geist*.[2] The position of objective *Geist* within the system of Hegel is thus defined by the dichotomy of the finite and the infinite and the trichotomy of subjective, objective and absolute *Geist*.

In the times after Hegel, the term 'objective *Geist*' has been re-interpreted several times. Dilthey's hermeneutical conception of *Geist* as 'objectification of life'[3] is well known; but Dilthey himself emphasizes the difference between his own concept of the objectified *Geist*, which is constructed on the basis of the 'reality of life,' i.e. subjective experiences, and Hegel's 'metaphysically constructed' concept of objective *Geist*, which neglects the 'power of the irrational.'[4] For my part, I am not convinced that the replacement of a metaphysics of the concept by a metaphysics of life leads to a more fruitful

1 Hegel, *Enzyklopädie,* § 386, *GW* 20, p. 383

2 Hegel, *Enzyklopädie*, § 385 Zusatz, *GW* 25–2, p. 940–1.

3 W. Dilthey, *Der Aufbau der geschichtlichen Welt in den Geisteswissenschaften*, in: *Gesammelte Schriften*, Bd. VII, Leipzig-Berlin: Teubner, 1927, p. 146ff.

4 W. Dilthey, *Der Aufbau der geschichtlichen Welt in den Geisteswissenschaften*, p. 150ff.

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concept of objective *Geist*. So I will rather examine certain uses of that term in contemporary philosophy. It is advisable, however, to first present the main definitions of the Hegelian concept of objective *Geist*.

13.1 The Objectivity of the Objective *Geist* (Hegel)

Hegel defines objective *Geist* as a 'world to be brought forth and produced by it [...] in which freedom is an existing necessity.'[5] From the point of view of extension, this term refers to the institutions of abstract law, morality and ethicality,[6] that is, the family, civil society and the state, which, as a whole, normatively structure the socio-political being-together of human beings. Now, what does the objectivity of these structures consist of? It is not purely objective because institutional arrangements only endure through the action and interaction of existent or becoming subjects. Even when objectified, *Geist* is a constant movement towards itself, a 'return of the external to the internal'; Hegel specifies that it becomes *Geist* 'only through this return.'[7] In the formations of objective *Geist*, then, one is dealing with a combination of subjectivity and objectivity; therefore, 'the difference between subjective and objective *Geist* [...] cannot be regarded as a rigid one.'[8] This smooth difference nevertheless plays a major role in the overall structure of the sphere of *Geist*. In order to fully conceive the concept of *Geist*, one must give an account of the necessity of both its objectification and its subjectification.

It is only with the third moment of objective *Geist*, ethicality, that its concept acquires its full density, which, incidentally, is perfectly normal, in that it does not stand beside law and morality, but encloses them within itself; it is, in fact, metonymically identical with objective *Geist* as a whole. Only in it do the interactivity of the subjective and objective dimensions of *Geist* become apparent; while they are still separate in abstract law and morality. Ethical life is 'the unity and truth of these two abstract moments, [...] so that freedom as substance exists as much as reality and necessity as it does as subjective will.'[9] The objectivity of objective *Geist* (its 'substance') is carried and animated by subjects who find a reciprocal context of actualization in the given institutions of ethical life [ethicality]. Genuine subjectivity is rooted in the complex network of the various ethical institutions. Therefore, in the *Phenomenology of Geist*, the transition from consciousness, self-consciousness and (subjective) reason to *Geist* is a necessary one: from the point of view of philosophical analysis, the forms of (finite) subjectivity presuppose the world of *Geist* or the successive historical worlds of *Geist*.

5 Hegel, *Enzyklopädie,* § 385, *GW* 20, p. 383.
6 The morality that orients or is intended to orient subjects also belongs to objective *Geist* because it consists of norms that claim universal, objective validity.
7 Hegel, *Enzyklopädie*, § 381 Zusatz, *GW* 25–2, p. 930.
8 Hegel, *Enzyklopädie*, § 387 Zusatz, *GW* 25–2, p. 943.
9 Hegel, *Grundlinien*, § 33, *GW*14–1, p. 48.

A clear presentation of the concept of objective *Geist* can be found in the introduction to the second moment of Chapter V of the *Phenomenology of Geist*, which describes the emergence of the 'kingdom[s] of ethical life.'[10] Its location must be taken into account. If it is true, as it is often assumed, that the content of the doctrine of objective *Geist* of the *Encyclopedia* is broadly similar to that of Chapter VI ('The *Geist*') of the *Phenomenology*, why is ethical life not defined in this chapter but in Chapter V ('Reason')? It would be incomprehensible if the classical conception of reason were to be held as a power of the subject, while the objective world was conceived as an incoherent multiplicity waiting for a representational synthesis. Such a conception may correspond to the self-imagination of human reason; nevertheless, it formulates at most the subjective 'certainty' of reason, not its 'truth': thus, the scope of the chapter titled 'Certainty and Truth of Reason' is understood, which defines, as it were, the *terminus a quo* and the *terminus ad quem* of the movement of reason. Two statements characterize these two starting and end points of the process. The first is at the beginning of Chapter V: 'Reason is the certainty of the consciousness of being all reality.'[11] The second opens Chapter VI: 'Reason is *Geist*, in that the certainty of being all reality is elevated to truth and it is aware of itself as its world and the world as itself.'[12]

The first statement describes the initial position of reason and what distinguishes it from the previous forms of consciousness and self-consciousness: reason claims that the present world is *its* world, and that the world only becomes what it is thanks to its appropriation by reason. But as soon as reason, at the end of what is admittedly a long and crooked path, has understood that it finds only itself in the world, then it has become *Geist*, and indeed objective *Geist*; for it has learned that it is only reason when it recognizes the equal dignity of the world, which is as original as itself. Now it is understandable why in the *Phenomenology of Geist*, the concept of ethical life is presented, so to speak, prematurely, that is, before the chapter on *Geist*. Ethical life and objective *Geist* itself are entities the experience of which compels reason to re-conceive itself as something other than a 'subjective capability': reason permeates both the conceptions and concepts of subjective reason and the material activities that constitute 'the life of a people,' that 'general substance' which 'speaks its general language in the customs and laws of a people.'[13] In short, ethical life enacts an 'objective reason'[14] which forces subjective reason to renounce its 'immediate certainty' of 'being all reality.'[15]

10 Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, *GW* 9, p. 194.
11 Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, *GW* 9, p. 133.
12 Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, *GW* 9, p. 238.
13 Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, *GW* 9, p. 195.
14 See Hegel, *Enzyklopädie*, § 467 Zusatz, *GW* 25–2, p. 1112.
15 Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, *GW* 9, p. 193.

At first glance, this depiction of ancient ethical life [ethicality] belongs to that longing for the 'beautiful ethical totality' which was powerfully expressed in the writings in Bern, Frankfurt, and previous writings of the Jena period, and which demanded the renunciation of the search for personal well-being and the complete agreement with the customs, culture and institutions of the *polis*. This conception of a 'happy' ethical life of the polis is, however, deeply shaken, as can be understood from a neighboring passage in the *Phenomenology of Geist*.

> However, once self-consciousness has attained this happy fortune, that is, where self-consciousness has achieved its destiny and where it lives surrounded by that destiny, then self-consciousness, which is according to the *concept* at first *spirit* and is *spirit* only *immediately*, leaves it behind; or also – it has not yet achieved its destiny, for both can be equally said. […]Reason *must depart from this happy fortune*, for the life of a free people is only *in itself* or *immediately* the *real ethical life*, or the real ethical life as an *existing* ethical life […] Or it could be that self-consciousness has *not yet attained this happy fortune* of being the ethical substance, the spirit of a people. For, having returned back from observation, spirit is at first not yet actualized as such through itself; it is only posited as an *inner* essence, or as an abstraction.[16]

In fact, this passage contains two contradictory statements about the political happiness of the *polis*' citizen – which is of course different from the selfish happiness of the modern bourgeois. On the one hand, Hegel states that 'reason must leave this happiness.' The '*higher principle of modern times*' implies, in fact, that the individual is no longer a mere accident of ethical substantiality.[17] But what makes this differentiation of the individual and of the political universality possible is the continued existence of what Hegel now describes as the modern civil society in its relative autonomy against the state. As a result, the 'beautiful happy freedom of the Greeks, which has been and will be so envied'[18] does not actually have to be abandoned but must be reconciled with the self-assertion of egoistic 'bourgeois' individuality. Modern ethical life, objective *Geist*, is not a 'work of art'; but individuality does not have to 'perish' as it had to in antiquity, so that the political community can be sustained and strengthened. Instead of the principle of ethical homogeneity of 'free peoples,' the self-assertion of the individual now renders possible a higher, differentiated, ethical life.

16 Hegel, *Phenomenology*, Pinkard 206–7. [Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, *GW* 9, p. 195–6].
17 Hegel, *Philosophie des Geistes*, *GW* 8, 1976, p. 263.
18 Hegel, *Philosophie des Geistes*, *GW* 8, 1976, p. 262.

But Hegel continues that 'self-consciousness [...] has not yet reached this happiness.' The individual self-consciousness must, in fact, 'seek his happiness'[19] instead of finding it in an already existing political community. This search can be painful, as can be seen in ancient times in the example of Antigone, but even more so in the experience of the modern social alienation of the 'bourgeois' (as a private person). It is nevertheless necessary, so that the rigid opposition between the individual and the ethical world becomes the productive contradiction of the 'ethical action' of the former and the legitimate claims of the latter. The lesson of the tragic conflict, according to Hegel, is that an ethical world that only asserts itself by suppressing individual self-assertion is doomed to self-destruction.[20] Antigone symbolizes not only the rights of the family gods, but also the power of the '*Geist* of the individuality' who claims the tragic 'right' to shake the compactness of the ethical order. The ancient polis had to kill Antigone and Socrates in order to preserve itself; therefore it no longer offers a valid pattern of ethical life. Another ethical life must be conceived, within which the self-assertion of individuality is not the destruction of the ethical world of the *Geist*, but its enrichment.

Chapter VI of the *Phenomenology* describes different phases of the crisis of 'ancient' ethical life, which is suddenly a crisis of objective *Geist* and a crisis of subjectivity. A crisis takes place because the 'solid trust' of the individual in ethical institutions is underpinned by the individual's own self-assertion.[21] As soon as the individual is understood as the 'living truth' and no longer as the mere 'accident' of ethical substance, 'the individual has confronted the laws and customs.'[22] It is now a matter of an ethical order different from that described in the *Phenomenology of Geist*, and one in which the self-assertion of individuality does not imply the destruction of the ethical world of *Geist*, but rather its enrichment and reinforcement. This is the achievement of the doctrine of objective *Geist* in the *Encyclopedia* and in the *Philosophy of Right*, the key concept of which is that of the *institution*. Through the analysis of the three ethical spheres (family, civil society and the state), the institutional rooting of social practices is emphasized, which should not only be considered in their individual dimension. In fact, thanks to his integration in a series of institutional arrangements, the individual can follow norms without imagining himself as oppressed and alienated. Hegel's philosophy of objective *Geist* does not in fact imply a rigid subordination of subjectivity to the institutionalized objective will; however, like

19 Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, *GW* 9, p. 196.

20 See Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, *GW* 9, p. 259: 'Das Gemeinwesen kann sich aber nur durch Unterdrückung dieses Geistes der Einzelheit erhalten, und, weil er wesentliches Moment ist, erzeugt es ihn zwar ebenso, und zwar durch die unterdrückende Haltung gegen denselben als ein feindseliges Prinzip.'

21 Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, *GW* 9, p. 196.

22 Ibid.

any institutionalism, it gives syntactic precedence to the objective structures of ethical life.

Of course, this primacy of objectivity has given rise to strong objections. The Hegelian Left, and later Critical theory, has replied that the autonomy of individuals in the face of the institutions is very limited when the various forms of subjectivity are primarily called upon to fortify the institutional arrangements that frame them. A double answer can be formulated in response to this reading.

For Hegel, subjective freedom is not just the pure ability to say no. For it is by no means self-evident that an individual who distances himself from the notions and practices that are in conformity with the institutions or thinks he is doing so is freer than one who agrees with them without compulsion.[23] In the modern situation with its differentiation of normative systems, the acceptance of objective norms does not imply a sacrifice of the 'right of individuals to their peculiarity.'[24] In fact, this subjective right is primarily considered in the pre-political strata of ethical life (family and civil society), and less at the state and political level. However, this *social* freedom is just as important as *political* freedom, which, however, could not exist without it.[25] Herein lies the profound difference between post-revolutionary society and the *Ancien régime*, in which everyone had an unchanging position in a rigid, hierarchical political-social space.

Although the subjects are subordinated to the 'law of the world,'[26] that is, to the normative designs of objective *Geist*, subjectivity, even in its most extreme forms, has nevertheless become consolidated thanks to the objective rationality of certain historically developed institutions. Thus the subject, which imagines itself as free and acts as such, is itself a rather late product of history.[27]

So where does the objectivity of objective *Geist* come from? Hegel's answer to this question is clear, but by no means self-evident: this objectivity results from the institutional structuring of ethical life, which gives rise to specific types of social and political subjectivity, namely social behavior and attitudes such as 'professional or estate-related honour (*Standesehre*)'[28] and civic subjectivity, that is, to 'political attitude' (*politische Gesinnung*). These forms of ethical subjectivity, in turn, nourish and reinforce the objective forms of ethical life. But they are also capable of denying them, sometimes even of inundating them. When and how does such a revolution of the

23 Hegel's aversion to the romantic 'dear I' is explained by this: see Hegel, *Grundlinien*, § 140 Anm., *GW* 14–1, p. 132 ff and the Rezension der Schriften Solgers, *GW* 16, p. 77–128.

24 Hegel, *Grundlinien*, § 154, *GW* 14–1, p. 142.

25 See also F. Neuhouser, *Foundations of Hegel's social theory : actualizing freedom*, Harvard University Press, 2009.

26 Hegel, *Grundlinien*, § 33, *GW* 14–1, p. 48.

27 See Hegel, *Grundlinien*, § 124 Anm., *GW* 14–1, p. 110.

28 Hegel, *Grundlinien*, § 253, *GW* 14–1, p. 198.

objective structures of ethical life take place? Hegel lets the task of determining the exact point of rupture to the *Zeitgeist*, that great crisis manager. It is sometimes thought, unfortunately, that the over-institutionalization of ethical life prevents Hegel's teaching of objective *Geist* from developing its normative potential.[29] This is debatable. However, this theory reminds us that a consistent normative theory must never ignore the 'right of the world'; some current theories of justice have forgotten this.

13.2 An 'Expressive' Interpretation of Objective *Geist* (Charles Taylor)

It would be instructive to trace the development of what Philip Petitt calls 'the broadly Hegelian tradition of social holism'[30] within sociological and philosophical literature. A whole book should be dedicated to this, the writing of which would be all the more difficult because most of today's representatives of the philosophy of sociality, such as Margaret Gilbert,[31] John Searle,[32] Raimo Tuomela[33] or Hans Bernard Schmid,[34] have been culturally protected from any direct Hegelian influence. One should also examine everything that contributed to the reformulation of the problem of objective *Geist*, such as Durkheim's 'représentations collectives,'[35] the social rites and physical techniques of Mauss,[36] George Herbert Mead's 'emerging self'[37] and Bourdieu's 'sens pratique.'[38] Because of the impossibility of examining all these transformations of social ontology here, I will exercise a kind

29 See e.g. A. Honneth, *Leiden an Unbestimmtheit*, Stuttgart: Reclam, 2001, p. 102 ff. Honneth's standpoint has changed in the meantime, as one can see when reading his *Freedom's Right*.

30 P. Pettit, *The common mind*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 167.

31 M. Gilbert, *On social facts*, Princeton University Press, 1989; *Living together*, Rowman & Littlefield, 1996*Joint Comittment*, Oxford University Press, 2014.

32 J. Searle, *The construction of social reality*, Free Press, 1995; *Making the social world*, Oxford University Press, 2010.

33 R. Tuomela, *The Philosophy of sociality*, Oxford University Press, 2007. This book develops the theses of two foundational essays on collective intentionality: R. Tuomela / K. Miller, 'We-intentions,' *Philosophical Studies* 53–3 (1988); R. Tuomela, 'We-intentions revisited,' *Philosophical Studies* 125 (2005).

34 Voir H. B. Schmid, *Wir-Intentionalität*, Alber, 2012. H. B. Schmid (hrsg.), *Kollektive Intentionalität*, Suhrkamp, 2009.

35 See É. Durkheim, *Les règles de la méthode sociologique*, chap. V, PUF, 2007; *De la division du travail social*, l. III, chap. II, PUF, 2007; *Sociologie et philosophie*, chap. I, PUF, 1996; *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse*, PUF, 2008.

36 See M. Mauss, *Essai sur le don* et *Les techniques du corps*, in *Sociologie et anthropologie*, PUF, 2008.

37 See G. H. Mead, *L'esprit, le soi et la société*, translated by D. Cefaï and L. Quéré, PUF, 2006, p. 271 *sq*.

38 See P. Bourdieu, *Le sens pratique*, op. cit.; *Esquisse d'une théorie de la pratique*, Droz, 1972; *Méditations pascaliennes*, Éd. du Seuil, 1997.

of (not accidental, of course) probing, and examine the contributions of two contemporary philosophers, Charles Taylor and Vincent Descombes. Incidentally, these are two quite different cases in that Taylor has become known as a Hegel scholar, while Descombes, although he appropriates the notion of objective *Geist*, comes from the Wittgensteinian tradition and never misses an opportunity to distance himself from the 'Hegelians' – a family that is actually not particularly harmonious.

Charles Taylor is known as the author of an extensive monograph on Hegel, from which he has extracted a shorter version concerning social and political issues.[39] Before publishing *The Sources of the Self* and *Secular Age*, which are not included here, he also wrote a number of studies on epistemological issues of the social sciences which directly concern the subject under discussion here: the concept of objective *Geist*, although they do not specifically consider Hegel's work. Here perhaps, rather than in Taylor's Hegel works, one can examine the fertility and relevance of the concept of objective *Geist* in Taylor's view.

Taylor's two Hegel books attempt to show that 'Hegel's philosophy is at once incredible and highly relevant for us.'[40] Where does this paradox come from? For Taylor, the great merit of Hegel's philosophy is that it attempts to reconcile the two opposing trends that emerged after the decline of modern, scientifically oriented rationalism: the 'expressive' trend that began with Herder, and the Enlightenment that culminated in Kant's view of freedom as rational autonomy. However, Hegel's attempt to overcome 'the division between the two ideals of radical freedom and integral expression'[41] was doomed to failure by the strength of the tool conceived by him, namely a superhuman, 'cosmic' conception of *Geist*:

> Hegel's spirit (or *Geist*), although he is often called 'God,' and although Hegel claimed to be clarifying Christian theology, is not the God of traditional theism; he is not a God who could exist quite independently of men. […] On the contrary, he is a *Geist* who lives as *Geist* only through men. […] But at the same time the *Geist* is not reducible to man; he is not identical with the human *Geist*, since he is also the spiritual reality underlying the universe as a whole […]. For the mature Hegel, man comes to himself in the end when he sees himself as the vehicle of a larger *Geist*.[42]

39 C. Taylor, *Hegel*, Cambridge University Press, 1975; *Hegel and modern Society*, Cambridge University Press, 1979.

40 C. Taylor, *Hegel and modern Society*, p. 72 (see p. XI).

41 C. Taylor, *Hegel and modern Society*, p. 8.

42 C. Taylor, *Hegel and modern Society*, p. 11.

Taylor argues (in a not entirely justified manner) that this 'ontology of *Geist*' is now 'close to incredible.'[43] In the context of a non-metaphysical (or post-metaphysical) reading, with which I agree in principle, he rejects the metaphysics of absolute *Geist* (and its inner-worldly translation, the world *Geist*), which, in Hegel's case, seeks to guarantee the final elimination of the contradictions of objective *Geist*. Taylor asserts, however, that we should not necessarily adopt this tiresome view in order to acknowledge the 'relevance' and topicality of certain sectors of Hegel's philosophy, especially the doctrine of objective *Geist*.

Where does this relevance come from? While interpreters usually claim that it lies in the way Hegel's philosophy adopts and radicalizes Kant's program of an identification of rationality and freedom, Taylor, in conformity with his own basic philosophical options, argues that the most innovative part of Hegel's synthesis is its transcription of Herder's conception of expressivism, which constitutes an alternative to the opposite romantic interpretation of it. Beyond Herder, who for Taylor should be regarded as the legitimate initiator of modernity,[44] what does the term 'expressivism' mean? This term (which should in no way be understood as the mere standpoint of an 'self-expressing' subject) includes a conception of language, subjectivity and community at once. Language should not be understood only in terms of its mere signifying and communicative function: as soon as it allows something to be signified for someone, language, through its expressive dimension, has the capacity 'to make something manifest in an embodiment.'[45] This expressive dimension even transcends the realm of language: the action itself can be called expression in so far as it symbolically expresses something (a desire, an intention) that does not precede it as an representation. Although Taylor does not quote him, a well-known sentence by Hegel can be mentioned here: 'What the subject *is*, is the *series of his actions*.'[46] Therefore, the expressive perspective includes a new view of subjectivity. The subject is not primarily that cogito, that 'I think' which 'must be able to accompany all my representations,'[47] it is rather the ground of various expressive acts whose focus is a unified life through which the subject is constituted; in short, the subject is the center of a bundle of acts. This 'holism of meaning'[48] now requires a modified conception of intersubjectivity, or rather of community: an expressive act, whether linguistic or non-linguistic, is

43 C. Taylor, *Hegel and modern Society*, p. 69 (see p. 135).

44 See C. Taylor, 'The importance of Herder,' in *Philosophical Arguments*, p. 79–99.

45 C. Taylor, 'Action as expression,' in C. Diamond & J. Teichman (hrsg.), *Intention and Intentionality. Essays in honor of. G. E. M. Anscombe*, Brighton, Harvester Press, 1979, p. 73.

46 Hegel, *Grundlinien*, § 124, *GW* 14–1, p. 110.

47 Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, AA III, B 131.

48 C. Taylor, 'The importance of Herder,' in *Philosophical Arguments*, p. 93–5.

not a mere manifestation of a subjectivity, or even of an inter-subjectivity: 'What is made manifest is not exclusive, not even mainly, the self, but a world.'[49] This world is, of course, first and foremost a linguistic world, a community of speech acts and discourse; but in a broader sense it is also a whole of common meanings, institutions and symbols: a social world or, as Hegel says, '[an] I, that is a We, and [a] We that is an I.'[50]

At this juncture, we return to the problem of objective *Geist* and ethicity [ethical life], i.e. to concepts which play a major role in Taylor's interpretation of Hegel because they belong to a holistic view of society, which for Taylor is 'far from implausible or bizarre,' and in any case is 'much superior to the atomistic conceptions of some of Hegel's liberal opponents.'[51] Taylor describes these main Hegelian concepts in the following way:

> We can think of the institutions and practices of a society as a kind of language in which its fundamental ideas are expressed. But what is 'said' in this language is not ideas which could be in the minds of certain individuals only; they are rather common to a society, because embedded in its collective life, in practices and institutions which are of the society indivisibly. In these the *Geist* of the society is in a sense objectified. They are, to use Hegel's term, 'objective *Geist*.'

These institutions and practices make up the public life of a society. Certain norms are implicit in them, which they demand to be maintained and properly lived out. […] The norms of a society's public life are the content of the *Sittlichkeit*.[52]

I have quoted this passage extensively because it provides a clear and suitable description of what should be understood by 'objective *Geist*,' but also because it leads us to question the correctness of the 'expressive' approach. In Taylor's view, the individual is not fully individualized until it is included into a 'larger life.'[53] This means that any 'atomistic' view of society is excluded by the holistic view of objective *Geist*. Society is not a collection of individuals; on the contrary, individuals constitute themselves, receive a recognized or recognizable identity only when they are included in the larger life of a 'We' that precedes them.

But why this holistic view of *Geist* should be interpreted in the direction of an expressive unity is not entirely clear to me. In an essay on Hegel's

49 C. Taylor, 'Language and human nature,' in *Philosophical Papers*, 1: *Human Agency and Language*, Cambridge University Press, 1985, p. 238.
50 Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, *GW* 9, p. 108.
51 C. Taylor, *Hegel and modern Society*, p. 94.
52 C. Taylor, *Hegel and modern Society*, p. 89.
53 C. Taylor, *Hegel and modern Society*, p. 125 and *passim*.

philosophy of *Geist*, Taylor contrasts a 'causal theory of action' like Davidson's, which understands actions as a kind of natural 'events,' with a 'qualitative theory of action.'[54] Now, if by this is meant that an analysis of action should take into account its teleological character, i.e. the fact that it has not only causes but also reasons, then it is probably not necessary to adopt an expressive perspective and engage in a hermeneutic procedure. Hegel's conception of teleology and the 'syllogism of action' in the *Science of Logic* is a good example of what a non-objectivist, but also non-hermeneutic view of action looks like.[55] Here lies the reason for my partial disagreement with Taylor: to dispute the objectivist causal understanding of social facts does not, in my view, necessarily require, in the tradition of Dilthey, to contrast 'explaining' and 'understanding.' To put it metaphorically, it is not necessary to read Hegel with Herder's glasses to reconstruct the meaning of his theory of action and his conception of objective *Geist*.

Incidentally, perhaps the most convincing remarks by Taylor on the concept of objective *Geist* are not those contained in his 'expressive' reading of Hegel; in my opinion, they are rather to be found in the writings on the philosophy of the social sciences.[56] In the essay 'Interpretation and the Sciences of Man' that aims at questioning the objectivist orientation of contemporary social and political sciences, and in particular at refuting the misconception that social facts can be regarded as 'brute facts,'[57] Taylor proceeds from the principle of social ontology that 'language constitutes reality' (according to Searle) in order to interpret, in a Wittgenstein-inspired perspective, all social practices as institutional facts in so far as they are a kind of 'rule-governed behavior.'[58] This leads him to notice the existence of intersubjective meanings, which are 'constitutive of the social matrix in which individuals find themselves and act.'[59] However, two types of intersubjective meanings are to be distinguished, namely 'shared meanings' which arise from the convergence of existing individual opinions, and 'common meanings' which arise from a 'consciousness which is communally sustained' and which constitute

54 C. Taylor, 'Hegel's philosophy of mind,' in *Human Agency and Language*, p. 78–9. See D. Davidson, 'Actions, reasons and causes,' in *Actions and events*, Oxford University Press, 2001.

55 Voir Hegel, *WdL* 3, *GW* 12, p. 154.

56 See also V. Descombes, 'Y a-t-il un esprit objectif ?,' *Les Études philosophiques*, 3/1999, p. 347–67, especially pp. 356–7.

57 Taylor leans on E. Anscombes' Essay, 'On brute facts,' *Analysis* 18 (1957–1958), p. 69–72, and on J. Searles' distinction between *brute facts* and *institutional facts*: see *The construction of social reality*, New York: Free Press 1995; *Making the social world*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2010.

58 C. Taylor, 'Interpretation and the sciences of man,' in *Philosophical Papers*, 2: *Philosophy and the Human Science*s, Cambridge University Press, 1985, p. 34.

59 C. Taylor, 'Interpretation and the sciences of man,' in *Philosophy and the Human Science*s, p. 36.

'what makes community.'[60] Taylor draws a conclusion from this, which contains an obvious allusion to Hegel:

> We are aware of the world through a 'we' before we are through an 'I.'[61]

One could not better define the notion of objective *Geist* and draw the outlines of research programs that could be established on its basis independently of Hegel's understanding of this concept.

That such a program is fruitful can be seen in Taylor's essay on Atomism. There, based on a discussion of the 'primacy-of-rights theory' defended by Robert Nozick,[62] Taylor develops a critique of 'rights-based' theories. Such theories presuppose an 'atomistic' understanding of society, according to which it is a grouping of individuals who exist by nature. Taylor emphasizes that the absoluteness of rights can only be established on the basis of this atomistic view; in contrast, a holistic theory states that rights are inseparable from an 'obligation to belong' to the kind of social life that makes their entitlement possible.[63] If in our social order rights are indeed factors that contribute to the constitution of identity, one cannot miss the fact that they have a 'social matrix' like all normative provisions do.[64] Here we are dealing with a rewording of Hegel's thesis that rights and duties are inseparable in the context of modern ethical life.[65] Charles Taylor is never more loyal to Hegel than when he considers something other than Hegel's work itself.

13.3 Hegelian Against his Will: Vincent Descombes

In his paper, 'Y a-t-il un esprit objectif?' (Is there an objective *Geist*?), Vincent Descombes points out that Charles Taylor rehabilitates the concept of the objective *Geist* by freeing it from Hegel's 'unwieldy metaphysics';[66] this assessment, incidentally, is entirely in keeping with Taylor's intention. But Descombes' own project, namely to include this concept in the 'set of sociological concepts of *Geist*' in order to clarify the 'metaphysics'[67] it requires, aims at something other than Taylor's, although both share the opinion that a holistic viewpoint should replace the 'spontaneous atomism

60 C. Taylor, 'Interpretation and the sciences of man,' in *Philosophy and the Human Science*s, p. 39.
61 C. Taylor, 'Interpretation and the sciences of man,' in *Philosophy and the Human Science*s, p. 40.
62 C. Taylor, 'Atomism,' in *Philosophy and the Human Science*s, p. 188ff. See R. Nozik, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, New York: Basic Books 1974.
63 C. Taylor, 'Atomism,' in *Philosophy and the Human Science*s, p. 198.
64 C. Taylor, 'Atomism,' in *Philosophy and the Human Science*s, p. 208.
65 See Hegel, *Grundlinien*, § 155 u. 261, *GW* 14–1, p. 143 u. 208–10.
66 V. Descombes, 'Y a-t-il un esprit objectif ?,' *Les Études philosophiques*, 3/1999, p. 348.
67 V. Descombes, 'Y a-t-il un esprit objectif ?'; quoted from p. 347 and 350.

of modern common sense.'[68] It is not a matter of developing an expressive conception of *Geist*, but rather a social ontology that refers to Peirce and Wittgenstein rather than Hegel and Herder. In my view, then, Descombes describes his own project more as that of Taylor when he claims that it is time to 'rehabilitate something like an "objective *Geist*" in a version that might not be acceptable to Hegel, but is considered indispensable by sociology.'[69] For my part, I believe that Descombes' view of objective *Geist* is much more acceptable to 'Hegelians' (or at least to a clan within that tribe) than Descombes himself believes.

Descombes proposes the following definition of the objective *Geist*: it 'consists of established rules or habits that exist independently of individual arbitrariness and reciprocal agreements.'[70] Such a view can refer to Montesquieu's idea of the 'esprit général de la nation'[71] as well as to Hegel himself; we know, incidentally, how highly Hegel valued Montesquieu's 'genuinely philosophical standpoint.'[72] Descombes continues:

> What we are interested in is less the concept of objective *Geist*, in the way an orthodox Hegelian would understand it, than the family of concepts whose ancestor is the idea of a 'spirit of the laws' or of the institutions.[73]

As we shall see, however, this holistically understood 'social *Geist*' shows a much more 'Hegelian' face than Descombes himself believes, at least if one refrains from reading Hegel according to the standards of 'French Hegelianism',[74] i.e. approximately according to Kojève's interpretation.

In *La denrée mentale* (roughly 'The spiritual good'), Descombes illustrates the inadequacy of the prevailing, internal conception of *Geist*, according to which *Geist* is 'inside,' not 'outside.'[75] The general thesis of the book is that 'mentalism' (which is also a cognitivism in that its conception of mental states is based on the Cartesian model of object representation) contains a (sometimes unconscious) philosophical choice for an ontology that 'gives *Geist* the metaphysical constitution of a physical thing.'[76] Such metaphysics,

68 V. Descombes, 'Y a-t-il un esprit objectif ?,' quoted, p. 353.
69 V. Descombes, 'Y a-t-il un esprit objectif ?,' quoted, p. 355.
70 V. Descombes, 'Y a-t-il un esprit objectif ?,' quoted, p. 350.
71 Montesquieu, *L'esprit des lois*, livre XIX, chapitre IV, Paris: Classiques Garnier 2011, p. 329. Descombes also quotes this beautiful passage from Montesquieu: Peoples, like individuals, have a 'manière de penser totale' (*Mes Pensées*, n° 398).
72 Hegel, *Grundlinien*, § 3 Anm., *GW* 14–1, p. 26.
73 V. Descombes, *Les institutions du sens*, Paris: Editions de Minuit 1996, p. 287. Of course, since 1831, the controversy over what an orthodox Hegelian is has never ceased.
74 V. Descombes, *Les institutions du sens*, p. 227.
75 V. Descombes, *La denrée mentale*, Paris: Editions de Minuit 1995, p. 10.
76 V. Descombes, *La denrée mentale*, p. 271.

by the way, groups together a number of different conceptions, ranging from decided spiritualism to radical materialism (in the case of contemporary cognitive science).[77] This metaphysics is opposed to a holistic and intentional perspective. For this purpose, the 'mentalistic' characters of the concept of intentionality, which still exist in Husserl and in French phenomenology, are to be excluded. Based on the insights of Peirce, Wittgenstein and Searle, Descombes proposes to form a 'non-Cartesian view of intentionality.'[78] In this respect, meanings are not 'in the head'[79] in the sense that they cannot be reduced to the model of representation; conversely, *Geist*, understood as 'order of meaning,' is 'present in the world, in symbolic practices and institutions.'[80] It follows from this first part of the study that 'the study of *Geist* [...] will be holistic, nothing else.'[81]

But the exact definition of that holism of *Geist* is to be further defined. In fact, there are at least two forms of it: there is a *methodological* holism, which uses holistic concepts to describe mental states, and an *anthropological* holism, which considers the mental states of the subject to be truly determined by the shaping of his social and historical environment.[82] Descombes also distinguishes between a 'collectivist holism,' which remains tainted with atomistic prejudices, and a *structural* holism, which coincides with the conception of objective *Geist*.[83] It will now be examined whether and how the correctly understood holism requires a certain understanding of objective *Geist*. In relation to Peirce, Descombes notes that the description of social relationships (such as marriage, contract) and the roles and acts to be played and performed in them requires the use of 'dyadic' or 'polyadic' predicates: I cannot mention a husband without an implicit reference to the wife (or husband); I cannot imagine a murderer without imagining the victim and the social rule that determines the murder.[84] This rather complicated analysis aims to prove that no social relationship can be described without recourse to non-subjective but institutional meanings, which cannot be defined by an individual but by a present 'we' that includes the collective historical memory and the visions of the future of the social groups concerned. In order to describe the truly acting social *Geist*, one must assume that 'the *objective Geist* of institutions precedes and enables the *subjective Geist* of particular individuals.'[85] This objective *Geist* should not, however, be confused, as in

77 A prime example of this is D. C. Dennett's conception of mental activity mentioned, for example, in *Freedom evolves* or *Kinds of minds*.
78 V. Descombes, *Les institutions du sens*, p. 17.
79 V. Descombes, *La denrée mentale*, p. 284.
80 V. Descombes, *La denrée mentale*, p. 94.
81 V. Descombes, *Les institutions du sens*, p. 93.
82 V. Descombes, *Les institutions du sens*, p. 89.
83 V. Descombes, *Les institutions du sens*, p. 121.
84 See V. Descombes, *Les institutions du sens*, Cap. 17, p. 211ff.
85 V. Descombes, *Les institutions du sens*, p. 15.

the case of Dilthey and Merleau-Ponty, with an *objectified Geist*, that is, with an originally subjective *Geist*, which is deposited in an objective milieu and gives it a 'human atmosphere' (Merleau-Ponty).[86] The genuine objective *Geist* is originally of an objective nature, and 'manifests the presence of the social in everyone's mind.'[87]

As I said, Descombes wants to distinguish strictly between his concept of objective *Geist* and that of Hegel. Not because he is hostile to Hegel. On the contrary, he sometimes adopts not only Hegel's terminology, but also Hegel's arguments, which is a rather serious transgression on the part of an 'analytical' philosopher. For example, he has linked Hegel and Peirce in so far as they are 'the two philosophers of the number three.'[88] He also praises Hegel for deciphering the institutional normativity of the objective *Geist*:

> Something important would get lost if one stuck to objectified *Geist*. […] Within the hermeneutic re-formulation of Hegel's concept of objective *Geist*, which serves the purpose of liberating it from the speculative tasks that have their origin in the system, something gets lost; one forgets the *normative* content of the facts that it is supposed to render comprehensible.[89]

Anyway, it seems indispensable for Descombes to free himself from the 'bulky metaphysics' (i.e. from absolute *Geist*, etc.) that pollute Hegel's brilliant insights. One can well understand this; incidentally, the supporters of a 'non-metaphysical' reading of Hegel do the same. But criticism sometimes misses the target. For example, on the occasion of an prominent analysis of the 'triadic fact of gifting,' Descombes shows, by relying to Peirce, that gifting is not a mere material transfer of objects from A to B, that is, not a mere dyadic relationship, but a triadic relationship that always presupposes the mediation of a 'rule of gifting,'[90] i.e. an institutional definition of gifting. Descombes adds, however, that 'the mediation [in the sense of Peirce, who himself consciously uses Hegel's language] is by no means dialectical,' because it does not lead to a 'synthesis that removes the contradiction'[91] – as if the dialectic corresponded to the misguided school-reading 'thesis-antithesis-synthesis' explicitly criticized by Hegel! Dialectic in Hegel's sense is largely removed from the caricature uncritically adopted by Descombes.

86 M. Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception*, Paris: Gallimard 1945, p. 400.

87 V. Descombes, *Les institutions du sens*, p. 289. This formulation is taken quasi-literally by Durkheim.

88 V. Descombes, *Les institutions du sens*, p. 231.

89 V. Descombes, *Les institutions du sens*, p. 286.

90 See V. Descombes, *Les institutions du sens*, p. 242.

91 V. Descombes, *Les institutions du sens*, p. 244. Die selbe Sicht der Dialektik ist in der übrigens sehr klugen Widerlegung von Lévi-Strauss 'Kritik des *Essai sur le don* von Marcel Mauss zu finden: see *Les institutions du sens*, p. 255.

However, one should not adhere to this a little schoolmasterly criticism, and one should be aware of the conceptual proximity of the two ways of argumentation. In fact, Descombes' account of the paradoxical character of the 'triadic fact of gifting'[92] and Hegel's own account of the same paradox in the case of another social act, the contract, coincide exactly. The contract, according to Hegel, contains a contradiction, for I am determined as the owner by the particular act (of sale), whereby I cease to be the owner in favor of another.[93] But this contradiction exists only from the point of view of the subjective will of both parties; in fact, it is not resolved by a 'synthesis' but by the institutional act of mediation through the contract, thanks to which 'my will… becomes objective to me.'[94] In the context of this kind of reading, Hegel's doctrine of objective *Geist* is very close to the sober conception of it preferred by Descombes.

A brief final remark. It is no coincidence that important philosophers such as Charles Taylor and Vincent Descombes adopted a concept as strange at first sight as that of objective *Geist*. Indeed, it is highly important, if one wants to eliminate the conventional way of imagining the 'mental good' (as Descombes, following Mallarmé, put it), to 'de-subjectify' the concept of *Geist*, or rather to free oneself from the 'mentalist' prejudices inserted in language itself. This was precisely what Hegel intended when he distinguished subjective *Geist* from the socially institutionalized objective *Geist*. The immense fruitfulness of this concept, which various branches of the social sciences have appropriated or might have appropriated, is that the objective *Geist* is not *my Geist*, although it can only appear to me as something foreign in a deep crisis of social and cultural identity. It means the presence within me of an 'outside' which appears to me as something outside only when I am no longer able to be 'with myself.' In other words, in order for the 'I' that each of us strives for to become possible, there must be a 'we' that brings with it the social practices that make 'collective identity' possible and real.[95]

92 See V. Descombes, *Les institutions du sens*, p. 242–5.
93 Hegel, *Grundlinien*, § 72, *GW* 14–1, p. 77.
94 Hegel, *Grundlinien*, § 73, *GW* 14–1, p. 77.
95 V. Descombes, *Les embarras de l'identité*, Paris: Gallimard 2013, p. 227.

14 The Absolute Spirit as the Consummation of Hegel's Concept of Truth

Tobias Dangel

Introduction

If we pose the question how Hegel's philosophical system as a whole can best be characterized, it is challenging to give a straightforward answer which covers the variety of topics Hegel deals with in his philosophical logic, as well as in his philosophy of nature and his philosophy of spirit. Nonetheless, when we look at § 1 of the *Encyclopedia* we receive an initial orientation supplied by Hegel himself, since it is there where he gives a preliminary description of his concept of philosophy and determines the content by which philosophy is governed and demands a scientific elaboration.

> The objects of philosophy, it is true, are upon the whole the same as those of religion. In both the object is truth, in that supreme sense in which God and God only is the truth. Both in like manner go on to treat of the finite worlds of nature and the human mind, with their relation to each other and to their truth in God.[1]

In § 1 Hegel makes it unmistakably clear that philosophy and religion share the same content and that this content is the truth. The truth, we can say, is the common ground on which philosophy and religion are based and by which they are intrinsically connected. Hegel obviously does not share the view that the relation between philosophy and religion can only be polemical since philosophy accepts the obligation of giving and demanding reasons while religion is irrational and mere superstition. But Hegel lets us not only know that philosophy and religion are intrinsically connected by their relation to truth since truth is their common content, but they also share an understanding of truth which conceives of truth in the highest sense of the word. And this highest or supreme sense of the word is that God and only God is the truth. When Hegel points out in § 1 of his *Encyclopedia* that the proper content of philosophical science is truth in the supreme sense of the

1 Trans. Wallace, slightly modified.

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word, he reminds us that there is also an inferior sense of truth and that this sense means something which is not God. Already in § 1 Hegel distinguishes at least two senses of truth, a supreme sense and an inferior sense, and the content by which Hegel's philosophy is governed and a determined science is truth in its supreme sense. What is the result for Hegel's understanding of the philosophical science when he links his concept of such a science to truth in the supreme sense of the word? First we can say that, according to Hegel, philosophical science is the science of truth and, therefore, it is the science of God. Hence, it is correct to say that for Hegel philosophy is at the same time aletheiology, i.e. science of truth, as well as theology, insofar as God (θεός) is the supreme sense of truth (ἀλήθεια). Both moments, truth and God, cannot be separated in Hegel's understanding of what philosophical science is. But that is not enough. Hegel informs us secondly that, like religion, philosophy deals with the truth or with God at first and only subsequently with finitude, i.e. with nature, the human mind, their relation to each other as well as their relation to God as their truth. The truth which Hegel has in view in § 1 of his *Encyclopedia* must, thus, be regarded as an infinite and self-dependent truth, while nature, the human mind and their relation to each other belong to a sphere in which the supreme sense is not realized. In fact, the nature, the human mind and their relation to each other have truth, according to Hegel, only by their relation to God. Insofar as the sphere of finitude and the sphere of God as the sphere of infinite truth are distinguished, the inferior sense of truth belongs in a broad sense to the nature, to the human mind and to their relation to each other. They do not have truth on their own, but only in relation to the infinite truth of God. In other words: The truth which belongs to the sphere of finitude is a dependent truth and philosophy as the science of truth in the supreme sense of the word deals with nature, the human mind and their relation to each other only because they have truth in relation to God. This is why God is the starting point and the endpoint of philosophy while nature, the human mind and their relation to each other stand for the finite middle by which the starting point and the endpoint are mediated.

When Hegel in § 1 of his *Encyclopedia* refers to a truth which is in its supreme sense God, it becomes necessary to take a closer look on his concept of truth. We have to question how this concept is conceived by Hegel so that for him God whose idea contains the idea of a self-dependent infinity is adequate to the concept of truth. In the following reflections, I will work out a detailed profile of Hegel's concept of truth in three steps. The first step concerns Hegel's distinction between a formal and an objective truth – a distinction which helps us to understand better in how far Hegel's concept of truth is, in its inner core, an ontological concept. In the second step, I will pose the question why Hegel brings his notion of the Idea which he develops in the *Science of Logic* together with his ontological understanding of truth, while in the third and last step I focus on Hegel's concept of the absolute spirit which unrestrainedly satisfies the ontological concept of

truth so that the absolute spirit must be regarded as a being in which the one, self-dependent and infinite truth has reality so that the absolute spirit is not only the realization of Hegel's concept of truth, but also his philosophical concept of God.

14.1 Objective vs. Formal Truth

As is expected, Hegel speaks about truth at numerous places in his *Encyclopedia*. Comparing his statements it becomes clear that he generally distinguishes between truth in an authentic sense, which is for Hegel the philosophical sense of truth, and a truth which is for him merely formal and stands for its inauthentic sense. Hegel characterizes the formal truth in relation to our consciousness which is constituted by the difference between an I which is the subject of consciousness and a Non-I to which the subject refers to as its object.[2] Furthermore, Hegel understands formal truth as an adequation or agreement between the subject's representation and its object. Having Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* in view, it is obvious that Hegel follows here Kant's nominal definition (Namenserklärung) of truth in the chapter 'On the division of general logic into analytic and dialectic' in the *Transcendental Logic* where Kant states that truth is 'the agreement of cognition with its object.'[3] As the agreement of a representation or, in Kantian terms, a cognition with its object, formal truth is obviously a property of a representation or a cognition. When Hegel speaks of representations having the property to be true he means theoretical judgements, since it is in theoretical judgements that we make truth claims, so that it is more precisely the theoretical judgement which has the property to be true or false insofar as such a judgement is objectively valid. For a theoretical judgement is true when the synthesis of its concepts agrees with the object the judgement refers to. When Hegel states that formal truth is the adequation between a representation and its object, we must understand such a representation as a theoretical judgement so that formal truth is the truth of theoretical judgements. With respect to formal truth, then, it is the object itself which functions as the material criterion for the being true or false of the judgements since it depends on the object, whether the synthesis of concepts agrees with the object or not while the formal criterion is simply the principle of non-contradiction. Because of this Kant draws the conclusion that for our theoretical judgements a general criterion of truth can only be formal, while a general criterion of truth which is material does not exist.

According to Hegel, the common understanding of truth is truth as formal and this understanding is the inauthentic and in its inauthenticity the unphilosophical understanding. Hegel confronts the formal truth, then,

2 On this, see *Enc.* § 413–6.
3 Kant (1998): 193 (B 82).

with the authentic and philosophical concept of truth which holds on to the idea of adequation or agreement, but liberates this idea of being restricted to the relation between a representation and its object. Or in other words: Hegel liberates the truth from being restricted to theoretical judgements. With this in mind he writes in the supplement to § 213 of the *Encyclopedia*:

> Truth is at first taken to mean that I *know* how something *is*. This is truth, however, only in reference to consciousness; it is formal truth, bare correctness. Truth in the deeper sense consists in the identity between objectivity and the notion. It is in this deeper sense of truth that we speak of a true state, or of a true work of art. These objects are true, if they are as they ought to be, i.e. if their reality corresponds to their notion. When this viewed, to be untrue means much the same as to be bad. A bad man is an untrue man, a man who does not behave as his notion or his vocation requires.

Formal truth which belongs to our theoretical judgements and which is conditioned by the fact that we make truth claims in our judgements is not only named formal by Hegel, but he goes so far to say that this understanding of truth is almost misguiding for it does not reach the 'deeper sense' of truth. For formal truth implies that the representation has to follow the object to be adequate which is why theoretical judgements for Hegel are in the end not true or false, but rather correct or false. Formal truth means truth in the sense of correctness so that with regard to theoretical judgements the opposition of true and false actually means the opposition of correct and false.[4]

Hegel distinguishes between formal truth as the adequation of a representation with its object – an adequation which constitutes the correctness but not the truth of a representation – and an understanding of truth which contains the philosophical sense of truth and which understands truth as material or objective. Such an objective truth is, for Hegel, truth in the sense of the Idea which means truth in the sense of the unity of notion and reality. Insofar as Hegel's philosophical concept of truth means truth in the sense of the unity of notion and reality which is not the correctness of a representation with regard to its object, Hegel postpones the 'place of truth' from the theoretical judgement to the object itself. Under the condition that the Idea articulates the philosophical understanding of truth, what Hegel wants to say is that truth is not a property of a representation or theoretical judgement, but it is the state of the object itself insofar as an object exists as the

4 That Hegel distinguishes between truth and correctness has already been pointed out by Stern 1993. See also the detailed discussion of this distinction and its relevance for Hegel's conception of philosophy, Halbig 2002.

unity of its notion and its reality.[5] For this reason it is also better to say that an object as the unity of its notion and its reality does not have the property of being true but that it exists as truth. Everything which exists in the mode of the unity of notion and reality exists in the mode of the Idea and that means it exists as truth or as a true being.[6]

An understanding of truth which allows us to regard something which exists as a true being is, according to Hegel, not a sole possession of philosophical theory but this understanding is also expressed in the everyday language which speaks in a natural way of 'true works of art' or 'true states' – an expression which seems to be meaningless under the condition of the formal understanding of truth. For there can be true or more accurately correct judgements about works of art or states, but what could it mean to say that a work of art or a state itself is true. Hegel reminds us that expressions like a 'true work of art' or a 'true state' are based on an understanding of truth in the sense of the Idea, so that everyday language is already familiar with the philosophical understanding of truth. Whether a work of art or a state is true or not is in no way conditioned by our judgement on it. Works of art or states can exist as beings which are true in themselves without our acknowledging or judging their truth. Whether something exists as a true being, according to Hegel, depends solely on whether it exists as the unity of notion and reality.

What makes Hegel's theory of an objective truth which regards truth as the unity of notion and reality and thus in the sense of the Idea more complicated is the fact that the existence of a being allows a graduation of that unity. Whatever exists cannot only exist as something true or as true being, but it can also exist as a more or less true being, i.e. an object can be in its existence more or less adequate to its notion and, thus, more or less the realization of its notion. With respect to a work of art or a state, what we want to say when we speak of them as true is that the work of art or the state entirely realize the notion of a work of art or the notion of a state and that a work of art or the state in their existence are adequate to their notion. With his conception of truth which enables Hegel to conceive of truth as lying in the objects themselves, he deploys against Kant the ontological

5 When we remember that, for Hegel, the supreme object is God as the absolute spirit the reality of which is the spirit's self-thinking, Guyer 1993: 179–80 is correct when he writes: 'Hegel thinks that Kant should have been led by the concept of judgment directly to his own conception of all rationality as the recognition of the fundamental identity of being and thought [...]. In Hegel's view, in every judgment we get at least a partial glimpse of the fundamental identity between the structure of our thought and the structure of reality itself, and the function of the totality of our judgments is nothing less than to provide absolute knowledge of this identity, which is the culmination of philosophy itself.'

6 See for this Dangel 2013: 246–62. An extensive examination of Hegel's engagement with former concepts of ontology is given by Doz 1987. See also Halfwassen 1999.

concept of truth which we already find in ancient metaphysics,[7] especially in Aristotle, since it was Aristotle who understood the concrete individuals as substances (οὐσία) which are in themselves the unity of a conceptually explainable essence (εἶδος) and matter (ὕλη).[8] For Aristotle, the essence functions as the form-giving principle of an individual and thus as the principle by which an individual has substantiality, while the matter functions only as the substrate for the form-giving essence. On the basis of such a theory of what it means to be a substance, according to Aristotle, the individuals obtain the status of something which exists as true being, while the principle of its being true is its essence or its εἶδος, i.e. its conceptually explainable form. A substance exists as a true being dependent upon its essence which it can be more or less adequate to in its existence.[9] That Hegel deploys the ontological conception of truth of ancient metaphysics becomes particularly clear in his doctrine of the judgement in the *Science of Logic*. In this doctrine Hegel shows that not all forms of a judgement are appropriate to express truth but only the form of the judgement of the notion. For it is this judgement in which we claim in the predicate the unity of notion and reality in the object to which we refer by the subject term. Thus, only in the judgement of the notion we affirm or negate the unity of notion and reality in the object.

> In this judgement the notion is laid down as the basis, and since it is in relation to the object, it is an *ought-to-be* to which the reality may or may not be adequate. Therefore it is only a judgement of this kind that contains a true appreciation; the predicates *good*, *bad*, *true*, *beautiful*, *correct* etc. express that the thing is *measured* against its universal *notion* as the simply presupposed *ought-to-be* and is, or is not, in *agreement* with it. [...] The judgement of the notion, on the contrary, is objective and the truth as against those earlier judgements, just because it has for its basis the notion, not the notion in external reflection or in *relation to* a subjective, that is contingent, *thinking*, but the notion in its determinateness as notion.[10]

The judgement of the notion is a judgement about the truth of an object since it claims by using predicates like 'good,' 'beautiful' etc., which signify an ontological perfection, that the object in itself is a true or false existence.

7 Cf. for Hegel's recourse to ancient metaphysics Halfwassen (2019).

8 Cf. *Met* I, 3, 983a 24–983b 3 or *Met*. VII, 3, 1028b 33–1029b 12.

9 In *Met*. II, 1, 993a 30 Aristotle defines philosophy as theory of truth (θεωρία περὶ τῆς ἀλήθειας), while he in *Met*. II, 1, 993b 26–30 states 'that that which causes derivative truths to be true is most true. Therefore the principles of eternal things must be always most true; for they are not merely sometimes true, nor is there any cause of their being, but they themselves are the cause of the being of other things, so that as each thing is in respect of being, so it is in respect of truth.' (translation Ross).

10 Hegel 1969: 657–658. Transl. Miller, slightly modified.

That is, in the judgement of the notion we refer to a truth lying in the object itself so that in the judgement of the notion we judge whether an object is ontologically true or not.[11]

14.2 Degrees of Truth

Hegel's distinction between a formal and an objective truth is the distinction between truth as a property of representations or theoretical judgements which refers to truth as correctness and truth as the mode or status of how an object exists, i.e. truth in the sense of the Idea. The question of whether an object exists as Idea is, thus, the question whether its reality is adequate to its notion. Insofar as the notion contains all the determinations with which the reality of an object must coincide in order to be a true existence, the truth of such an existence can be measured on the basis of its notion. To know the truth of the existence of an object presupposes the knowledge of the notion of the object. This is the reason why Hegel says in § 21 of his *Encyclopedia* that the notion contains the 'the value of a thing, the essential, the inner, the true.'

Hegel's ontological turn in the matter of truth allows him to regard an object as something which is a true existence – an existence which depends on the coincidence of the object's reality with its notion. Such a coincidence is gradable and permits of varying levels of degrees since it can be more or less realized so that the object itself can exist as a more or less true being. A further aspect of Hegel's ontological concept of truth is that an object which exists as a true being insofar as its reality is in unity with its notion can contain a lower or higher degree of truth than other objects which are of a different notion. Thus, it depends on the object's notion to which class of objects it belongs and what it means for an object to exist as a true being. Not all objects or not everything which exists as a true being exist of the same degree of truth in respect to objects of other classes. According to Hegel, objects which belong to different classes can contain a different degree of truth, though they exist as true beings. Already in § 1 of the *Encyclopedia*, we saw that Hegel distinguished between a higher and a lower sense of truth. Under the condition that the notion principally contains what is essential and, thus, the truth of an object, so that an object can exist as something true only dependent upon its notion and under the

11 Having this in view Doz 2013: 230 writes: 'Sur la base du jugement catégorique implicite la question : le sujet est-il adéquat au predicat, ainsi, à son concept ? se pose de nouveau. En étant adéquat à son concept du seul fait d'avoir une certaine nature, le sujet peut encore lui,être adéquat *ou non*, lui corresponde *ou non*, car, en raison de la distance qui existe toujours entre le singulier et l'universel, le singulier qui est ce qu'il est *a encore* à être ce qu'il est. Un nouveau jugement devra donc être posé, dont le prédicat exprimera cette adéquation ou cette inadéquation, tels : bon, mauvais, vrai, beau, juste. Convenons de désigner un prédicat de cette sorte «prédicat de normalité».'

condition that there is a multiplicity of notions, according to Hegel's ontological conception of truth, it is possible to speak of a higher and, thus, a truer truth as well as of a lower and thus a less true truth. In other words: for Hegel, it is possible to say that an object according to the unity of notion and reality does not only exist as a true being, but that it is also a truer object than another because of its notion which contains the essential determination of what an object is and of what it ought to be. For in the latter case, the notion of a class of objects is of a higher degree of truth than the notion of another class of objects so that the objects which belong to the different classes are true beings, but their being true is of different degrees. How is this to be understood?

If we take, for instance, Hegel's concept of nature, it is well known that he regards nature in its most general and abstract determination as the self-externality of the Idea. His understanding of nature gains a much richer and much more concrete determination in the particular notions of nature which Hegel develops as his philosophy of nature in the *Encyclopedia*. These particular notions of nature have their richest and most concrete determination in the notion of the life of the animal organism. Thus, the general concept of nature as the self-externality of the Idea has its consummation in the notion of animal life. Insofar as the notion of animal life is the highest notion within the sphere of nature, a living being which as an organic system realizes in itself a living relation between all of its parts and the entire organism so that the parts become the limbs of the organism.[12] Living beings are higher and thus truer beings than natural beings which are inorganic and, thus, lifeless like sand dunes, mountains, clouds, waterfalls etc. Such objects are lifeless because they lack the special kind of inner organization which would allow them to perform those functions in which life exists. In the case of a sand dune, this means, then, that it is an object which exists in such a mode that its reality simply does not coincide with the notion of organic life in any sense. Hence, a living being like a dog is, according to Hegel's philosophy of nature, principally a truer being within the sphere of nature than a lifeless being like a sand dune. Having this in mind, it is necessary to differentiate between the degrees of truth when we speak, for example, of the notion of animal life in contrast to the notion of mechanism which is why a being in which the notion of animal life is realized exists as a truer being than a being which is lifeless, and the grades of truth within beings which are determined by the same notion and, thus, belong to the same class of objects. So, for example, the disease of an individual animal is ontologically a restriction of the coincidence of the notion of life and its reality in the animal since the conduct of life is disturbed because of the disease so that conduct of life does not coincide unrestrainedly with the notion of life.[13] Of

12 Cf. *Enc.* § 350.

13 See *Enc.* § 371 for Hegel's conception of the disease of a living being.

course, the latter does not mean that in the case of a disease the unity of notion and reality is totally dissolved since such a dissolution would imply the death of the animal. A living being, the reality of which is in no sense in unity with the notion of life, is no longer a living being, but decays to the level of an inorganic object. The notion of life becomes, thus, the highest and most concrete notion within the sphere of nature so that according to Hegel's ontology of truth we are allowed to say that an animal exists as a truer being than something which is lifeless, so that the existence of an animal is a truer existence than the existence of a mountain, for example. For the notion of life is a truer notion than subordinated notions like mechanism and chemistry, while in an individual animal as such the unity of the notion of life and its reality in the conduct of life can be a restrained or an unrestrained unity which, for example, is expressed by phenomena such as disease or health.

The reason why, for Hegel, a living being which realizes the notion of life is the highest and truest way in which nature itself exists in an individual being is that in living beings the entire organism is related in all of its parts to itself, while every part is the part that it is only by its relation to all other parts and, thus, to the entire organism. Because of the self-relation of the whole in all of its parts, Hegel sees in the phenomenon of natural life a mode how the subjectivity of the spirit already appears within the sphere of nature. Animal life marks, thus, the highest realization of the spirit within the sphere of nature, i.e. within the sphere in which the Idea is self-external. On the other hand one can see that animal life because of its self-relation which is a preliminary stage of subjectivity in nature, is the highest tier in which the nature which is at the beginning only the self-externality of the Idea reaches an inwardness in which the Idea returns to itself. Hence, life is the highest realization of the inwardness of the Idea within the sphere of nature. For animal life which is, as such unconscious and unaware of itself, is not only an appearance of the inwardness of the subjectivity of the spirit, but animal life also marks the transition from nature to spirit within the sphere of nature, i.e. to the sphere which Hegel characterizes in opposition to nature as the sphere of the return of the Idea to itself.

Insofar as animal life contains the transition from nature to spirit and the spirit is the return of the Idea to itself from its self-externality, according to Hegel, all modes in which the spirit exists are truer existences than existences which belong to the sphere of nature. This is the reason why Hegel says in § 248 of the *Encyclopedia*:

> *Vanini* said that a piece of straw was enough to prove the being of God, but every product of the spirit, the very worst of its imaginings, the capriciousness of its most arbitrary moods, a mere word, are all better evidence of God's being than any single object. It is not only that in nature the play of forms is unbounded and unbridled contingency, but

> that each shape by itself is devoid of its notion. *Life* is the highest to which nature derives in its determinate being, but a merely natural Idea, life is submerged in the irrationality of externality.[14]

The finite knowing of the subjective spirit which as consciousness is still constituted by the opposition of an I and its object – a Non-I – as well as the intersubjectively shared conduct of life of persons in family, in civil society or the state, contains a higher truth and are thus ontologically truer existences than every being which belongs to nature and is merely of a natural existence. But also within the sphere of the spirit something can exist in a higher or lower grade of coincidence with its notion. So a state, the notion of which contains determinations like the principle of the separation of powers, of the rule of law or of the guaranty of subjective freedom rights, as Hegel shows in the *Philosophy of Right*, can be in its reality more or less adequate to its notion. A state which coincides in its reality with the notion of the state is thus a true existence while a state which falls behind its notion is less true since it is not the unconstrained adequacy of reality and notion. A state which does not realize, for example, the principle of the separation of powers may nevertheless be a state, but it does not realize its notion without a lack which is why such a state exists only in a restrained modus as Idea. The fact that for Hegel there are beings which are of a higher truth than other beings presupposes that the notions with which the reality of a being must coincide in order to exist unrestrainedly as Idea must be knowable and able to be revealed in their truth. Only if it is possible to know the truth of the notion of a being which exists it is possible to measure, too, its truth. According to Hegel, it is not only possible to know that the notion of the state is a higher notion than the notion of animal life, but it is also possible to know whether a single state is a true existence and hence an existence in the mode of the Idea.

14.3 The Absolute Spirit as the Consummation of the Absolute Idea

Something which exists as the coincidence of reality and notion and, thus, in the mode of the Idea exists as something true or as a true being. Whether such a true being is in itself the existence of a high or even the highest truth depends on the systematic place of its notion which is 'the essential' or 'the true' and, thus, the ontological norm of a being within the system of notions. In the *Science of Logic* where Hegel shows that the Idea or the unity of reality and notion is the philosophical concept of truth it becomes clear that the notion of the Idea as such is not the consummate truth. Since for something which exists in the mode of the Idea it is basically possible that both, notion and reality, can dissolve. In the case of a living being such a dissolution is not a disease but rather

14 Transl. Petry, slightly modified.

the animal's death. In the case of a state the dissolution would be its collapse caused, for example, by a revolution. That something can exist in the mode of the Idea so that it exists as a true being does not preclude that such a being is of a finite existence. That something can exist in the mode of the Idea and is nevertheless a finite existence has its reason in the possibility of the dissolution of reality and notion in a being. The consequence of this dissolution is the ceasing to exist of the being. Hegel explains this in his introduction to his doctrine of the Idea in the *Science of Logic*:

> Wholes like the state and the church cease to exist when the unity of their notion and their reality is dissolved; man, the living being, is dead when soul and body are parted in him; dead nature, the mechanical and chemical world – taking, that is, the dead world to mean the inorganic world, otherwise it would have no positive meaning at all – dead nature, then, if it is separated into its notion and its reality, is nothing but the subjective abstraction of a thought form and a formless matter. *Spirit* that was not Idea, was not the unity of the notion with its own self, or the notion that did not have the notion itself for its reality would be dead, spiritless spirit, a material object.[15]

A being which exists as Idea exists as a finite being if a dissolution of reality and notion is possible. This implies that such a being is also of finite truth. Existing as Idea does not *eo ipso* override the finitude of such an existence and, thus, the finite truth of the being. The latter implies that in a being which is of finite existence the coincidence of reality and notion without which an object cannot exist as that which it is, reality and notion do not form entirely a single identity. If the reality and the notion were entirely identical so that the notion had its reality in itself and the reality were nothing else other than the determinateness of the notion, the reality and the notion could no longer dissolve. The total coincidence and unity of reality and notion would be truth not as finite but as infinite truth, because of the indissolubility of their unity. The Idea as the infinite truth in which the notion and its reality have reached a unity which consists of the mutual pervasion and the entire identity of both is Hegel's concept of the absolute Idea. Thus, he writes in § 236 of the encyclopaedical logic: 'This unity is consequently the absolute and all truth, the Idea which thinks itself – and here at least as a thinking or Logical Idea.' And in § 237 he continues:

> Seeing that there is in it no transition, or presupposition, and in general no specific character other than what is fluid and transparent, the absolute Idea is for itself the pure form of the notion, which contemplates its contents as its own self.

15 Hegel 1969: 757.

In § 1 of the *Encyclopedia*, as we have seen at the beginning, Hegel has preempted that the nature, the human mind and their relation to each other belong to the sphere of finitude which can now be understood in the sense that in this sphere notion and reality or form and content do not totally pervade each other. The finite existence of a being which is the result of this lack is, according to Hegel, sublated in and by the spirit when the spirit conceives its own notion. For when the spirit conceives its own notion the notion is not only for the spirit, but the notion also has its reality in the knowledge which the spirit has of itself. The entire and unconstrained identity of notion and reality exists only in and as the self-knowledge of the spirit and that means in a thinking in which the spirit conceives its own 'essential' which is nothing else other than the notion of the spirit itself. The entire identity of notion and reality can exist only in and as the knowing self-relation of the spirit. In other words: Only in the spirit's self-thinking is the finite existence of the Idea overcome and the spirit no longer exists in its finite appearance when it conceives its own notion and exists, thus, as the knowledge of itself. For Hegel, the spirit when it exists as the knowledge of itself cannot be a finite true being any longer. Its self-thinking and -knowing is the existence of infinite truth since it realizes in its thinking the unconstrained coincidence of notion and reality which is why in the self-thinking and -knowing of the spirit the notion of the spirit and the reality of the spirit have become entirely identical. Hence, for Hegel, the existence of the infinite truth can only be the knowing self-relation of the self-thinking of the spirit when the spirit conceives its own notion.[16]

The appearance of the spirit in which it conceives its own notion and exists as the total identity of its notion and its reality is the spirit as the thinking self-relation which Hegel names the 'absolute spirit.'[17] A central point of Hegel's doctrine of the absolute spirit is that it does not only exist as Idea, i.e. as the unity or coincidence of the notion and the reality of the spirit, but that it is the existence of the absolute Idea itself since in the thinking self-relation of the spirit its notion is completely for the spirit. The spirit, in general, exists as the absolute spirit when it thinks its own notion and exists, thus, as the thinking self-relation in which the spirit knows itself, i.e. its own 'essential.'

Hegel distinguishes between two forms how the spirit is explicitly for the spirit and, thus, the existence of the infinite truth. The one is religion and

16 Lauer 1982: 133 is correct when he states: 'The consciousness which finite spirit has of objects as, so to speak, over against itself is but an aspect of its self-consciousness, and this self-consciousness is but a facet of the overall self-consciousness of the absolute Spirit. Strictly speaking, finite spirit does not *have* either consciousness of objects or of itself; it *is* finite manifestation of infinite self-consciousness. Only as identified with absolute Spirit is finite spirit what it itself really is.'

17 See for Hegel's conception of the absolute spirit particularly Peperzak 1987: 17–37 and 79–165.

more precisely the true religion which is Christianity and the other form is philosophy. According to Hegel, religion must essentially be understood as the subject's turning to God – a turning which is carried out in the subject's participation in cultic forms. The deeper sense of the cult is, then, that the subject participating in the cult performs its unification with God, i.e. with the infinite truth, so that the subject itself exists in the process of the cultically-formed devotion as the infinite truth. This religious unification of the subject with God is, according to Hegel, a form of the knowing self-relation of the absolute spirit which he understands – as it is elaborated in the lectures on the philosophy of religion – as the *unio mystica* of the subject's finite consciousness with God as the objective and infinite truth. Hegel understands the subject's *unio mystica* as a knowledge in which the human's finite spirit becomes one with the absolute spirit while, conversely, the absolute spirit also becomes for itself in the human spirit which is united with God by the conduct of the cult. It is thus correct to say that, for Hegel, in and through the cult the human spirit knows itself as one with God while God becomes for himself in the cultic unification of the human spirit with him. The knowing unity of God and the human in the cult which Hegel understands as God's self-knowledge in the human's knowledge of God is, in the knowing unity of human and God, the self-knowledge of the spirit and, thus, absolute spirit – a knowledge which is, at its first stage, religion.

Though it is correct that religion is a form of how the absolute spirit knows itself, it is also correct that the form which adequately conveys what knowledge cannot be found in the religious representation of God or in the religious representation of the absolute spirit. For Hegel, religion already has with God or the absolute spirit the highest content of knowledge, but the form in which this content is known is not adequate to what knowledge really is. The true from of the self-knowledge of the spirit is thus not the cult which is based on a representational knowledge of God. Although the religion of the spirit, i.e. Christianity, possesses the true content the subject's unification with the objective and infinite truth is not the true and consummate unification. This true and consummate unification is realized only in the comprehensive thinking of the true content so that, according to Hegel, only in comprehensive thinking the entire identity of the notion and the reality of the spirit exists.[18] This kind of thinking is the true philosophical thinking so that philosophy as a theory of truth does not only have the notion of the spirit as its content,

18 In the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, Hegel refers to Meister Eckhart as a witness for his position that the human spirit and God can become identical: 'Meister Eckardt, a Dominican monk, in speaking of this innermost element, says, in one of his sermons, among other things, the following: "The eye with which God sees me is the eye with which I see Him; my eye and His eye are one. By righteous standard I am weighed in God, and God in me. If God were not, I would not be; if I were not, then He were not. It is, however, not needful to know this, for there are things which are easily misunderstood and which can only be thoroughly understood in thought."' (Hegel 1962: 217).

but philosophy is also in the form of comprehensively thinking the unity with the self-knowledge of the spirit itself. In § 573 Hegel determines the relation between philosophy and religion with the following words:

> This cognition [the philosophical cognition, T.D.] is thus the recognition of this content [the content of religion, T.D.] and its form; it is the liberation from the one-sidedness of the forms, elevation of them into the absolute form, which determines itself to content, remains identical with it, and is in that the cognition of that essential and actual necessity.

The elevation of the representation of God, or the spirit which can be found in religion, to the absolute form is the comprehensive thinking of the notion of the spirit in philosophy. This comprehensive thinking is identical to the insight in the spirit's genesis on the basis of the self-determination and self-unfolding of the absolute form – a genesis which has its starting-point in the logic which, as the concrete totality of all thought-determinations, is the absolute Idea which realizes itself in the nature and which becomes for itself in the forms of the finite spirit in order to be in the philosophical knowledge of the notion of the spirit the reality of the spirit's self-knowledge. Thus, in the philosophical knowledge or in comprehensive thinking of the notion of the spirit, spirit is known and knows itself as the unity of the logical sphere, the sphere of nature and the sphere of the spirit. This is the reason why, for Hegel, it is philosophy and only philosophy in which the true unification of the subject with the objective and infinite truth which is in its supreme sense God as the absolute spirit can be realized since it is only philosophy which is able to know the notion of the spirit in the form of comprehensive thinking and, thus, in the form of the absolute form itself.

Insofar as in philosophical comprehension the notion of the spirit and its reality coincide unconstrainedly, the knowing self-relation of the spirit in philosophy is a reality in which the absolute Idea and, thus, the objective and infinite truth exist. The absolute spirit which in the comprehensive thinking of philosophy does not only exist as the Idea, but much more as the absolute Idea, is the truest notion, that is to say the notion of the fulfilled truth. The absolute spirit is, thus, a being, the existence of which is the existence of the objective and infinite truth, i.e. of the absolute Idea. Because of this, the absolute spirit is Hegel's philosophical concept of God so that he can say that religion and philosophy share the same content. Having this in mind, Hegel writes in the second supplement to § 24 of the *Encyclopedia*:

> In common life truth means the agreement of an object with our conception of it. We thus presuppose an object to which our conception

> must conform. In the philosophical sense of the word, on the other hand, truth may be described, in general abstract terms, as the agreement of a thought-content with itself. [...] God alone is the thorough harmony of notion and reality. All finite things involve an untruth: they have a notion and an existence, but their existence does not meet the requirements of the notion. For this reason they must perish, and then the incompatibility between their notion and their existence becomes manifest. It is this kind that the individual animal has its notion; and the kind liberates itself from this individuality by death.

When Hegel conceptualizes philosophy as the science of truth he does not understand truth formally, but objectively since, for Hegel, truth in opposition to the mere correctness of a representation is related to the mode of existence of an object itself. The highest sense of objective truth, nevertheless, is God as the absolute spirit, since it is God in whom the ontological concept of truth has its consummation. With this concept of truth, Hegel returns to the understanding of truth which we find in ancient metaphysics. For already in ancient metaphysics God (θεός) was regarded as the true being (ἀληθῶς ὄν) in the eminent sense, on whom being *and* truth of all subordinated beings depend and who is, therefore, the highest origin of being and truth.[19] Insofar as Hegel sees the objective truth in the unity or coincidence of notion and reality he cannot avoid a theologization of his concept of truth since the entire identity of notion and reality can only be thought of as an infinite unity in which the notion and the reality mutually pervade each other so that both are inseparable. The name for such an unconstrained pervasion of notion and reality is God while the philosophical notion of God is the absolute spirit. While in Hegel the doctrine of the absolute spirit is at the same time the doctrine of the objective and infinite truth which has its fulfillment in God, God is not only the explicit or implicit content of all philosophical thinking, but philosophical thinking itself is divine when it is as comprehensively thinking in unity with the self-thinking of the spirit.

This is the reason why Hegel ends the second and the third edition of his *Encyclopedia* with an untranslated quotation which is taken from book Λ of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* where Aristotle unveils the deepest insights of his theology by stating that the intellect (νοῦς) becomes identical with its object (νοητόν) in the activity or reality of thinking (νόησις) and that the God is the highest intellect and the first substance which, as pure form, thinks nothing else other than its own thinking, so that God's reality is the self-thinking thinking of the divine intellect (νόησις νοήσεως).[20] And this means when we think of God with our νοῦς we become intellectually identical with God, so

19 A detailed discussion of this aspect of Hegel's metaphysics can be found in Dangel 2013: 270–7.

20 Cf. *Met*. XII, 7, 1072b 20-28 and *Met*. XII, 9, 1074b 33–34.

that our thinking is identical with God's self-thinking thinking. This self-thinking thinking, which is God's reality, is the pure or absolute form (εἶδος) which is its own content and which Aristotle regards as the most true, the ἀληθέστατον, amongst all beings and which functions for Hegel as the paragon of truth – a truth which he tries to regain in his *Science of Logic* and in his *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*.

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15 The Proximity of Philosophy to Religion

Hegel's Evaluative Reason

Dean Moyar

In a letter of July 12, 1816, to his old friend Friedrich Niethammer, Hegel writes, 'Our universities and schools are our churches.'[1] He is contrasting Protestantism and Catholicism, and apparently appropriating for universities the tasks that one would have thought Protestant ministers and their actual churches would perform. Just prior to this passage he writes, 'We have no laity; Protestantism is not entrusted to the hierarchical organization of a church but lies solely in universal insight and education.'[2] This is characteristic of Hegel: he does not say 'we have no clergy,' but rather we have no laity, no people who are *not* in the privileged class of priests.[3] The challenge is to understand what exactly Hegel is saying here about the relation of 'universal insight' to religion. Is he saying that universities, and the study of philosophy in particular, could function as religion and indeed replace traditional religion?

This question is another way of inquiring into the issue of philosophy's compatibility with religion that has driven the reception of Hegel's system from the beginning. It is clear that Hegel did not advocate an 'end of religion' thesis, and to the extent that he foretells in his philosophy the demise of religion it is rather in spite of himself.[4] His claim to Niethammer says more about the divinization of reason and philosophy than about the disappearance of religion. But what kind of philosophy could meet the standard of divinity, not only in the sense of defining a perfect being in the abstract (otherwise known as the philosopher's God), but also in the sense of a practice that could function as a kind of church? What conception of reason

1 *Briefe von und an Hegel*, hrsg. von Johannes Hoffmeister (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1953), Band II, p. 89.

2 *Briefe II*, 89. See the discussion of Hegel's letters to Niethammer in Terry Pinkard, *Hegel: A Biography* (Cambridge: CUP, 2000), 292–4.

3 In a more measured letter from six years earlier he had written to Niethammer, 'You yourself know best how important scholarly institutions of learning are to Protestants; that they are as dear to them as churches and certainly just as valuable.' *Briefe I*, 337.

4 See Espen Hammer, 'Hegel as a Theorist of Secularization,' *Hegel Bulletin* No. 68 (2013), 223–44, p. 224.

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would be both methodologically respectable and able to satisfy the highest aspirations of human community?

My opening discussion (Section 15.1) reconsiders the claim from the first section of the *Encyclopedia* that religion and philosophy share the same object, a claim that I elaborate with his discussions of the shared content and *import* [Gehalt] of the two practices. This import is both reflexive and evaluative, thought thinking what is best in itself, a conception that Hegel develops in the 'Logic of the Concept.' I give the outlines of that development (Section 15.2) to show how the logic of judgment and inference leads to the evaluative teleological conceptions of Idea and 'The Good.' I then turn (in Section 15.3) to Hegel's interpretation of Christianity in the Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion, examining his treatments of the trinity in terms of logic, consciousness and the depiction of religion in space and time. Against the objection that Hegel's evaluative conception of reason sets up philosophy to have an exclusive authority over what counts as good, I interpret his doctrine of the Absolute Idea as an inclusive method that grants to the subordinate evaluative domains their own standing. I argue that if there is a primacy of one domain over the others, the practical-evaluative domain of ethical action has a certain priority as the basis from which religion and philosophy emerge. The final step (Section 15.5) in the argument is then to show what religion and philosophy have to contribute if they are idealizations rooted in a given configuration of ethical life. The answer lies in the specific reflexivity of modern subjective freedom, which has a central place in ethical life but which can only express itself fully in the practices of art, religion and philosophy.

15.1 A Common Object and Import

The opening issue of the *Encyclopedia* is how to introduce the discipline of philosophy when its objects cannot be sensed and its method of inquiry cannot be presupposed. The opening answer is that we can look to religion for an initial representation of the object of philosophy:

> It is true that it does, initially, have its ob-jects in common with religion. Both of them have the *truth* in the highest sense of the word as their object, for both hold that *God* and God *alone* is the truth.
>
> (EL §1)[5]

5 References to Hegel's *Encyclopedia* give the section number and indicate if the text comes from a remark or addition. The first volume is abbreviated EL, and I generally follow the translation *The Encyclopedia Logic: Part I of the Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences with the Zusätze*, translated by T. F. Geraets, W. A. Suchting and H. S. Harris (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett, 1991).

This identification of truth with God is not as strange as it undoubtedly seems to most 21st-century philosophers. Truth in Hegel's view is an identity of subject and object or cognition and world, a view that fits ordinary epistemology but that also aims to explain the basis of that identity in reason itself. Truth 'in the highest sense of the word' is then an ultimate identity of God and world that belongs to traditional representations of divinity and to the unmoved mover of the philosophical tradition. Hegel clearly has in mind here already the God that he refers to in the *Science of Logic* when he writes that the Logic is '*the exposition of God as he is in his eternal essence before the creation of nature and of the finite spirit*' (*SL* 21.34/29).[6] This is why he says in the *Encyclopedia* that both religion and philosophy 'also go on to deal with the realm of the finite, with *nature* and the *human spirit*, and with their relation to each other and to God as to their truth.' (EL §1) Hegel's three part division of the *Encyclopedia* thus corresponds to the God-creation-spirit division of religion. The world viewed as produced through the mind of God is akin to the perspective of a philosophy of nature in which reason structures nature. But while philosophy operates in concepts, religion operates with representations, and thus portrays God as a father figure and creation as happening in a week's time.

Much of the 1827 Preface to the Second Edition of the *Encyclopedia* is devoted to the relation of religion and philosophy, with an emphasis on the methodological rigor of philosophy and the identical *import* of philosophy and religion. The issue of a common import – *Gehalt* – has gone largely unnoticed in the literature, with import typically assimilated to content (*Inhalt*) even though Hegel sometimes explicitly uses both terms (which would be superfluous if they were the same).[7] Not to be confused with the familiar word for salary (*das Gehalt*), the masculine *der Gehalt* is given by Duden as 'mental content [gedanklicher Inhalt]; spiritual, ideal value [geistiger, ideeller Wert].'[8] This 'ideal value' aspect is captured, if rather weakly, by 'import' (think *importance*). Sometimes its meaning is closer to essence, what is most distinctive and significant about the activity at issue. As I interpret Hegel's distinctive use of *Gehalt* it refers to a content that is essential

6 References to Hegel's *Science of Logic* [SL] give first the volume and page number from the *Gesammelte Werke* and then the page number from the translation *The Science of Logic*, edited and translated by George di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

7 See the notes to the Geraets, Suchting, and Harris translation of *The Encyclopedia Logic* for a justification of translating Gehalt with 'import' or 'basic import.' *EL*, xliv, 350n24. I drop 'basic' from their translation, since it obscures the fact that Hegel is just using the simple term in each case. They write, '*Gehalt* refers to the constituents or ingredients, but more specifically to the intrinsic value of something; for instance, to the proportion of gold in an alloy (the 'grade').' 350n24.

8 Duden Wörterbuch, available at www.duden.de/suchen/dudenonline/gehalt [Accessed September 28, 2019].

or substantial because determined through the reflexive form of thinking.[9] This may seem like a lot to build into such a basic term, but as we shall see Hegel uses *Gehalt* repeatedly to refer to content infused by our capacity for evaluatively loaded reflexivity.

Hegel implies an evaluative conception of *Gehalt* in the second Preface when he defends philosophy, and its proximity to religion, with explicit reference to value [*Wert*]. He defends the 'scientific cognition of truth' as 'the only one that can be of interest and value for the spirit,' and against the idea of undisciplined thinking (of the 'vain' understanding) he sets up his method as 'nothing else but the reestablishing of that absolute import beyond which thought initially strove to go …' (*EL*, 14–15/4–5).[10] He links this absolute import to the theme of reconciliation, suggesting that philosophy is in a position to recapture the identity of thinking and the world that is lost when philosophers do not pay attention to the method. Hegel reflects on speculative philosophy's ability to capture the import of basic practices that do not on the surface seem amenable to thought, and one of his main examples is 'simple-hearted religion and piety' [unbefangene Religion und Frömmigkeit]' (*EL*, 15/5). Against those who would criticize philosophy for undermining religion, Hegel defends philosophy as 'the quest for truth, but with the consciousness of the nature and worth [*Wert*] of the thought-relationships that bind together and determine every content' (*EL*, 17/6). Hegel thinks his method is in a position to recapture the basic identity expressed in simple piety at a level in which the thought relations determinately articulate the identity. Philosophy derives evaluatively loaded categories and brings them to bear on immediate content to demonstrate what is true, essential, good therein.

In his extended discussion of religion and philosophy the issue of their common *Gehalt* is front and center. Neither mere 'content' nor the rather generic 'import' seem to be adequate to what he is saying. What religion and philosophy share in common is not merely an object, and not merely a content, but something more like a fundamental orientation towards the unity of thinking and being, or subject and object. He writes,

> *The import is the same*, but just as Homer says about certain things that they have two names, one in the language of Gods, and the other

9 In his *Hegel Dictionary*, Inwood correctly identifies the distinction but does not follow up on it. He writes, 'There are two words for 'content': *Inhalt* and *Gehalt*. *Gehalt* differs from *Inhalt* in that, first, it implies that the content is more unified than does *Inhalt* (hence we might use 'content' for *Gehalt*, 'contents' for *Inhalt*), and, second, it implies more strongly the value of the content (hence *Gehalt* suggests 'import'). For both these reasons, the *Gehalt* of something is more closely intertwined with its *Form*, and Hegel, though he uses both words, usually contrasts *Form* with *Inhalt*.' Michael Inwood, *Hegel Dictionary* (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 1992), p. 109.

10 References to the *EL* Preface give first the page number in *Werke* 8.

> on the tongues of us men, the creatures of a day, so, too, there are two tongues for that import: the tongue of feeling, of representation, and of the thinking that nests in the finite categories and one-sided abstractions of understanding, and the tongue of the concrete Concept. … The foundation of scientific cognition is the inner import, the Idea that dwells in it, and the vitality [*Lebendigkeit*] of that Idea which is stirring in the spirit; just as religion is no less a thoroughly disciplined heart and mind [*durchgearbeitetes Gemüt*], a spirit awakened to awareness [*Besinnung*], and a fully formed import [*ausgebildeter Gehalt*].
>
> (*EL* 24/11)

He writes of the 'inner import' here as if it were the identity of concept and existence that he normally attributes to the Idea. The correlative ideas in religion indicate a subject who is educated to what is really significant, and that significance or evaluation is cultivated, educated ('*ausgebildet*' has an echo of Hegel's university-as-church claim).

The religious evaluation will obviously be much more colorful than the philosophical, and Hegel does not think that religion necessarily refers to philosophical concepts. He writes, 'there may be religion without philosophy, but there cannot be philosophy without religion, because philosophy includes religion within it.' (*EL* 24; 12) A philosophy that could not explain – and to some extent vindicate – religion would not be philosophy. One question is whether religion is changed, perhaps beyond recognition, in the process of its explication by philosophy. A further question is what philosophy's standards of rationality and method would have to look like in order to incorporate religion into its own self-conception.

We get a more definite sense of the affinity of philosophy and religion, and of the role of evaluation therein, from a passage in the introduction to the 1816 'Logic of the Concept.' He is commenting on the ordinary idea that something is 'only a concept,' a phrase that implies that the act of abstracting from the sensuous makes the concept less significant or valuable than the sensuous material that is abstracted from. He writes,

> In this view, to abstract means to select from a concrete material *this or that mark, but only for our subjective purposes*, without in any way detracting from the *value* and the *status* of the many other *properties* and *features* that are left out; on the contrary, by retaining them as *reality*, but yonder on the other side, still as fully valid as ever. It is only because of its *incapacity* that the understanding thus does not draw from this wealth and is forced rather to make do with the impoverished abstract. But now, to regard the given material of intuition and the manifold of representation as the real, in contrast to what is thought and the concept, is precisely the view that must be given up as condition of philosophizing, and that religion, moreover, presupposes as having already been given up. How could there be any need of religion,

> how could religion have any meaning, if the fleeting and superficial appearance of the sensuous and the singular were still regarded as the truth? But it is philosophy that yields the *conceptually comprehended* [*begriffene*] insight into the status of the reality of sensuous being. … Abstractive thought, therefore, is not to be regarded as the mere discarding of a sensuous material which does not suffer in the process any impairment of reality; it is rather the sublation and reduction of that material as mere *appearance* to the *essential*, which is manifested only *in the concept*.
>
> (*SL* 12.21; 518–9)

As with religion, philosophy presupposes that one has learned to appreciate the untruth of sensuous immediacy. What one does in philosophizing is to detract from 'the value and the status' of the sensuous, just as the religious believer looks past the immediate world for a deeper truth. The 'sublation and reduction of that material' is a process that Hegel clearly aligns with differentiating the value of one item in favor of the value of the other (the essential).

15.2 The Reflexivity of Evaluative Reason

Hegel's most beloved formulation of God is the Aristotelian *thought thinking itself*. He concludes the entire *Encyclopedia* with a passage from *Metaphysics* 12 that begins, 'Thinking that is in itself is of what is best in itself' (*EPS* §577). The reflexivity of thought is among the leading, though also among the least well understood, elements of Hegel's logic and philosophy as a whole. Taking my cue from some of the claims in the last section, I read this figure of reflexive thinking as an *evaluative activity*. It is a *movement* from thinking of what is other to the thinking of thinking that other. Or, it is what Hegel calls the return from otherness back to itself. These formulations are all rather opaque without some of the details of Hegel's logic. The final part, the 'Logic of the Concept,' depicts a conception of rationality that is manifestly both reflexive and evaluative, oriented by forms of judgment and inference and resulting in a conception of the Idea that can match religion's representation of divine efficacy. Hegel's absolute concept (which I refer to simply as the Concept) is constituted by the three moments of universality, particularity and individuality, moments that are at first enclosed in an immediate self-referential identity. Hegel's concern to align the Concept with religion is already quite clear in the opening discussion of the 'universal concept.' As both pure self-reference and self-differentiation, the universal is 'free power, [and] it could also be called *free love* and *boundless* blessedness, for it relates to *that which is distinct from it* as *to itself*; in it, it has returned to itself' (*SL* 12.35/532). The compressed statements of the Concept's internal differentiation are provocative and preliminary, with the real meaning of the moves spelled out in the development.

Hegel's first big move in the Logic of the Concept is from the Concept considered on its own (with its internal determinacy) to a separation of subject and object in *judgment*. Separated by the inner negativity of the Concept into subject and predicate, the copula joins the sides as the identity or unity. This identity is reflexive in so far as its attribution of a predicate to a subject is at bottom the attribution by the Concept of one of its own moments to itself. As Hegel develops the forms of judgment starting from the basic positive judgment, he identifies specific kind of subjects and specific kind of predicates that are appropriate to each form.[11] In the second major class, the 'judgments of reflection,' the predicates are essentialities that are relational determinations such as 'this thing is *useful, harmful*' (SL 12.71/569). In the 'judgments of the Concept' Hegel takes explicitly on board the evaluative in writing of goodness as the adequacy of a singular thing to its Concept: 'the predicates, "good," "bad," "true," "right," etc., express that the thing is *measured* against the concept as an *ought* which is simply presupposed, and is, or is not, in *agreement* with it.' (SL 12.84/582) Such judgments as 'This house is bad' (SL 12.85/583) are assertoric judgments that do not yet contain any information as to why the subject (the house) is bad. When we know why something is or is not good, i.e. adequate to its concept, we have determined its ought, or why it is evaluated as it is. In such apodictic judgments we identify the object with the specific characteristics that make it good.[12]

For Hegel's advance beyond the Kantian conceptions of judgment and objectivity, the key is coming to terms with the reflexivity and evaluative character of the *inference*. For Kant, the inference belongs to reason, and because inferences are removed from the direct reference to singular intuitions they are not suited to a constitutive role but only to a regulative one. In Hegel's view, the mediation that distinguishes inference from judgment does nothing to compromise the objectivity of the conceptual determinations specified therein. On the contrary, it is mediation that makes the inference the vehicle of objectivity, and indeed of life and the Absolute Idea. Hegel's arguments for the inference as a solution to the problem of givenness are well known. His inferentialism pioneers a strategy exploited by Peirce, Sellars and Brandom to criticize the claims of empiricists to ground knowledge in intuition or sense-data.[13] The difficulty with this strategy is

11 See Beatrice Longuenesse, *Hegel's Critique of Metaphysics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), and for a more sympathetic account, Kevin Harrelson, 'Logic and Ontology in Hegel's Theory of Predication,' in EJP, Volume 23 (2015), issue 4, 1259–80.

12 For a discussion of Hegel's evaluative judgments, see Paul Redding, *Analytic Philosophy and the Return of Hegelian Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), Chapter 6.

13 See Charles Sanders Peirce, 'Some Consequences of Four Incapacities,' in in *Writings of Charles S. Peirce: A Chronological Edition*, eds. Peirce Edition Project, Indiana University Press, 1981--, Vol. 2.; Wilfrid Sellars, *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* (Cambridge,

that it can seem to leave knowledge floating free or unconstrained by the world.[14] Hegel himself is quite critical of the formal inference as leading to arbitrary results, and he agrees with Jacobi's criticism that knowledge is pointless if it is just a connecting of condition to condition.[15] I have already highlighted a passage in which Hegel notes that there is a change of the world through the activity of thought. It is this basic move – that I identify with the evaluative – that saves his inferentialism from being merely a connection of conditions. He likes to stress (as in the above defense of abstraction) that the starting point or condition does not remain unchanged once it has been transformed, evaluated, in the result. This is admittedly rather difficult to see in the official treatment of the inference, but it becomes clear in the progression of 'Objectivity' from mechanism to teleology.

For our topic of the philosophy-religion relation, it is striking that Hegel identifies the transition to objectivity with the ontological proof of God's existence from the concept of God. He cautions against reading too much into the initial mechanistic objectivity, and he points ahead to the purposive activity of teleology:

> God as living God, and better still as absolute spirit, is only recognized in *what he does*. Humankind were directed early to recognize God in his *works*; only from these can the *determinations* proceed that can be called his *properties*, and in which his being is also contained.
>
> (12.128, 626)

The crucial point within even the first two standpoints of 'Objectivity,' namely mechanism and chemism, is that the object is constituted by a *process*. In each case it is an inferential process of determining the object through relations to other objects. Thought thinking itself becomes here (and remains through the Logic) *thought thinking the inferential process of its own development*.

In its teleological version the alteration that takes place in the process is an act of evaluation, and the return from the process to an enriched, more complex object, is a reflexive moment of reidentification. In the teleological

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MA: Cambridge University Press, 1997), and Robert Brandom, *Making it Explicit: Reasoning, Representing and Discursive Commitment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994) and *A Spirit of Trust:* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019).

14 Versions of this criticism have been leveled by Michael Kremer 'Representation and Inference.' In *Reading Brandom: On Making it Explicit*, edited by Bernhard Weiss and Jeremy Wanderer. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010) 227–46. 'Motivating Inferentialism: Comments on *Making it Explicit* (Ch. 2),' in *The Pragmatics of Making It Explicit*, edited by Pirmin Stekeler-Weithofer (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2008), 209–29.

15 For discussions of this charge, see Paul Franks, *All or Nothing* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005) and Karin Nisenbaum, *For the Love of Metaphysics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

process the universal (as 'subjective purpose') is a mode of evaluation, a way to subordinate the given world (of mechanical relations) to a shape that elevates some aspects at the expense of others. The means become 'good' in so far as they are properly employed to achieve a good purpose. The conclusion of the teleological inference is the realized purpose in which the harnessed means are identified as what the purpose was all along. In acting on a purpose I take the means that I consider good for, conducive to, that purpose, and of the resulting state of affairs I can say 'it is good so.'

The most important move in the entire 'Logic of the Concept' is the move from external purposiveness to the internal purposiveness of the Idea. It is this move that Hegel thinks will take him beyond the postulating stance of Kantian practical reason, and beyond the infinite striving of Fichte's I, to a concept akin to that of God present in the community of spirit. Hegel makes the move to inner purposiveness *twice*, once in the 'Teleology' section and once in 'The Idea of the Good.' In the first case it leads to life, and in the second it leads to the Absolute Idea. The truth of the purposive relation is a world that is already determined as adequate to purposes. In the Idea generally there is a world adequate to the Concept. In life there is a process that connects the individual living being to the universal genus through the assimilation of items in the environment. Perhaps the most intuitive way to get a hold of this move is by thinking of the difference between a mere world and a *life-world*. In the mere world we are used to thinking of subjective activity as projected onto an evaluatively neutral material world. We are used to thinking that after one acts to change that world, it reverts once again to a mere set of states of affairs that need not refer to any purposes at all. In a *life-world*, by contrast, everything is indexed to the purposes of the living beings within that world, so that there really is no difference between those beings and the world.

Hegel repeats the move from external to internal purposiveness in explicitly evaluative terms in 'The Idea of the Good.' The attitude of cognition takes objects to be given and theorizes them, while the practical attitude oriented by the Good aims to impose its purpose on that given world and thereby to change it. When the change has really taken place, it implies a world that was home to our purposes all along. This is the world according to the Absolute Idea, a purposively loaded world where everything is good or bad in so far as it serves the purposes of life. In ethical life, with the State as the 'march of God,' we get a version of spirit as community. That version of the Absolute Idea is on the plane of finitude rather than in the idealized domain of art, religion and philosophy.[16] I take up the question of how to understand the common structure of these four practices in Section 15.4,

16 See Dean Moyar, 'Urteil, Schluss und Handlung: Hegels logische Übergänge im Argument zur Sittlichkeit,' *Hegel-Studien* 42, 2007, 51–80, for the argument that the transition in the *Philosophy of Right* from morality to ethical life follows the transition to 'The Absolute Idea.'

but first we need to understand Hegel's reading of Christianity as the true or consummate religion.

15.3 The Truth of Christianity

Though he calls the Father-son relation in the Christian trinity a 'child-like relationship, a childlike form' (LPR 29,1.409/194),[17] Hegel does aim to demonstrate the truth of the basic moments and moves of the trinitarian picture.[18] The most revealing version of this defense comes in the 1824 lectures on the philosophy of religion, where he gives four different versions, or levels, of the structure of the trinity (for a total of 12 moments). The first is a logical depiction, the second a depiction as three 'forms in subjective consciousness,' the third is religion in space and the fourth is religion in time. We can see in this table how Hegel aligns the trinity with the three levels.[19]

	Logic	**Subjective Consciousness**	**Space**	**Time**
God	Universality	Pure thought, essence	Outside the world	Outside of time
Jesus	Particularity	Representation, consciousness	The world	History (past)
Holy Spirit	Absolute individuality	Subjectivity, thinking reason, free spirit	Inner place, community	Present and future

The first and most basic level treats the trinity as reflecting the three moments of the Hegelian *Concept*, namely universality, particularity and individuality. God is conceived as pure universality, or 'eternal being, within and present to itself.' Jesus is the particularization, appearance or being for others, and the Holy Spirit is 'the form of return from appearance into itself' (*LPR* 26,1.403/186).

Hegel connects the final moment of spiritual unity to the phrase 'God is love' (*LPR* 26,1.408/193), and he brings the trinitarian Spirit into even more familiar terms as exhibited in the relationships of friendship and family. He also identifies the Spirit with the concepts of *purpose* and *life*, and indicates quite clearly how the trinity lines up with the move to life within the Logic of the Concept. He writes,

17 References to the lectures give first the volume and page number from GW and then the volume and page number from *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, *Volume 3: The Consummate Religion*, edited by Peter Hodgson (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985).

18 For an excellent detailed account of Hegel's philosophy of religion, see Thomas Lewis, *Religion, Modernity, & Politics in Hegel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

19 See Hodgson's slightly more elaborate version of this table in *LPR* 27.

> Life maintains itself; self-maintenance means entering into differentiation, into the struggle with particularity, [the organism] finding itself distinguished from an inorganic nature, and its going outwards. Thus life is only a result because it has produced itself and is a product; moreover if we are asked, 'What is produced?' the answer is that what is produced is the life process itself, i.e., life is its own presupposition. This is just what the universal consists in: that it works through its process and that the process gives rise to nothing new; what is brought forth is already [there] from the beginning. It is the same with loving and being loved in return. Insofar as love is present, its utterance and all the activities to which it gives rise, whereby it is simultaneously brought forth and supported, merely confirm it. What is brought forth is already there: the confirmation of love is a confirmation whereby nothing comes forth save what is already there. Similarly, spirit sets itself forth, it is the initiating.
>
> (*LPR* 26,1.409–10/195)

Hegel here expresses the fundamental unity of the three moments through his conception of a self-referring teleological process. In terms of his own account in the Logic, Hegel is drawing us from the third moment of the Concept to the exposition of the Concept in 'Teleology' and 'Life.' Life is 'the immediate Idea,' but its structure of self-reproduction is the general hallmark of a rational totality. The language of 'already there' implies a reflexivity in the process, giving us a vivid rendition of how the import [*Gehalt*] is maintained through its own reflexive process.

The forms of subjective consciousness in the next level can also be aligned with the concept-judgment-inference division I discussed in the last section. The first moment is pure thinking itself, 'the simple activity of thinking, such that between the subject and object there is no [difference] and, properly speaking, subject and object are not yet present' (*LPR* 26,1.406/191). The second element is representation or appearance, what he calls 'consciousness entrapped in its relation to the other' (*LPR* 26,1.403/187). It is this second moment that is the standpoint of 'ordinary consciousness,' the starting point of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the general standpoint of judgment. The third form is subjectivity, which he elaborates as follows:

> Partly this subjectivity is immediate subjectivity, disposition, thought, representation, sensation, but also it is partly a subjectivity that is the Concept, i.e., it is thinking reason, the thinking of free spirit, which is inwardly free only through the return [into itself].
>
> (*LPR* 26,1.403/187)

With this list of capacities Hegel is emphasizing that the second moment remains present within the third moment. The subject of free spirit should not be overidealized into detached inferential form. This point is

crucial in the religion-philosophy contrast, for one of the great dangers of philosophical thinking is that it loses touch with the representational dimension in its (fully justified) attempt to move beyond it. Only a philosophy that can retain the particular in the universal is in a position to capture the freedom of modern ethical life and Protestant Christianity (more on this in Section 15.5).

To fully understand the reconciliation captured by Christianity, the appearance of God in space and time, in history, has to be thought through more concretely. The incarnation gives God a purchase in the world, bringing together 'divine and human nature' (*LPR* 26,1.424/214). God enters into the domain of 'contingency, in the whole range of temporal relationships and conditions,' which is a 'divestment of the divine' that 'has to be sublated' (*LPR* 426/216). Hegel reads the crucifixion of Jesus as signifying 'that *God* has died, that *God* himself is dead,' which philosophically means that negation is 'a moment of the divine nature' (*LPR* 26,1.428/219). It is through that death on the cross that God is fully reconciled with humanity. Or,

> Death is love itself; in it absolute love is envisaged. The identity of the divine and human means that God is at home with himself in humanity, in the finite, and in [its] death this finitude is itself a determination of God. Through death God has reconciled the world and reconciles himself eternally with himself.
>
> (*LPR* 26,1.429/220)

Considering the question of how this reconciliation is confirmed or verified, Hegel stresses that 'all sensory verification falls away, including miracles in the way in which they fall within the empirically external consciousness of faith' (*LPR* 26,1.430/220). It is natural to think of Jesus as performing miracles, but Hegel stresses that 'Christ himself renounces miracles' (*LPR* 26,1.430/221). Such externality of miraculous works is a category mistake: 'the true miracle is spirit itself' (*LPR* 26,1.430/221). The point holds for all reflexive activity that elevates us above the mere causal order, an elevation that he is contrasting with the supposed miracle of the violation of causal laws.

God is fully spirit only in the witness of the community of Jesus' life and death. The story of Jesus 'occurs essentially for the community; it must not and cannot be taken in isolation' (*LPR* 26,1.425/215). The verification of God as 'power over minds' 'has subsequently been manifested through the great community of the Christian church' (*LPR* 26,1.430/221). Looking at the actual sacraments of the Christian community, Hegel focuses on baptism and communion. One is born within a church: 'he or she is not born in misery and will not be confronted by a hostile world but by a world that is a church' (*LPR* 26,1.439/233). This lines up nicely with the transition to the Idea and the life-world that I discussed in the last section. Each individual

takes the content of religion as 'authority,' which is the case with all things that come to cognition (even sense-knowledge). 'They are given us as true; they are not our own insight. Our own insight comes only later on through the reworking, assimilation, appropriation, and taking back of this material' (*LPR* 26,1.439/233–34). This is one way to interpret the idea of a spiritual rebirth. Hegel makes a point here of contrasting his conception with that of Kant and Fichte: 'The representation of a perennial struggle is not here the last word, as it is in the Kantian philosophy, where the strife is unending and the resolution is put off to infinity … evil is implicitly overcome' (*LPR* 26,1.439–40/234). That implicit overcoming is what allows Hegel to think of ethical life as already a reconciled world of value, and to think of the state as a self-maintaining system of 'the living Good.'

The doctrine of spirit as maintaining itself in its own element runs the risk of losing touch with the second moment, a point that Hegel brings out in his comparison of communion in the Catholic, Lutheran and Reformed confessions. For the Catholic the divine is present in the host in a sensible manner, so that 'the divine is literally eaten by the worshipers,' and at the other extreme 'the sacrament is merely a lively recollection of the past, devoid of spirit' (*LPR* 442/236). Between these two is the proper Lutheran view, which 'begins from eating and drinking,' but 'is first spiritualized in the subject … it first exists as real spirit, spirit realized, in self-consciousness' (*LPR* 441/236). It is the moment of incorporating the sensible, elevating it through self-consciousness, that has to be preserved. There is room between the literal and the merely remembered.

15.4 An Inclusive Evaluative Method

Having now gotten a sense of Hegel's understanding of Christianity, how does philosophy share with religion an object, content and import? The question has to a great extent already been answered. The reconstruction of Christianity in philosophical terms is *already* a statement of their shared content. The three moments of the Concept are the basic terms of philosophical comprehension, and the three forms of subjective consciousness are the modes of consciousness examined by philosophy as well. Fitting the Christian trinity into these philosophical forms brings out the consonance of Hegel's philosophy and what he considers the absolute religion. When we move from the level of logic and consciousness to the domains of space and time, matters get more complicated. Does the 'representational' nature of religion as opposed to philosophy mean that religion must exist in space and time while philosophy does not? One could say that the *place* and *temporality* of philosophical practice are at best incidental to the practice. That does seem to be a widespread view, even today, but it is certainly not Hegel's view. This view would remain in the position of the first moment, God, in its placelessness and timelessness. For Hegel it is a sign of weakness rather than

strength to remain inward in this sense. But how do we think of the same content of religion and philosophy in the spatial and temporal forms?

To begin with, what is the philosophical equivalent of the story of Jesus and of the religious community? It is not too hard to come up with philosophical analogues of Jesus, most notably the figure of Socrates at the founding moment of Greek philosophy. The divinity of Jesus the person is not the same as the divine interrogating of Socrates, but in so far as Socrates' inner deity, his *daimonion*, does make him a new exemplar of reason's authority in the world, the comparison is apt. He is not literally resurrected, but his teaching lives on in Plato and the tradition just as Jesus' teaching lived on in the church. Yet at the level of community there does not seem to really be a place for a philosophical 'cultus' or for the rituals that sustain the religious community. One tries to imagine the philosophical community as a band of professors worshipping the Concept, drinking symbolic Hemlock in Jesus's memory. It makes sense to think of *devotion* to the method, to rigor and clarity, but as this is normally understood it seems to be something completely different from religious practice. The lack of philosophical sacraments and the distance from rituals of birth and death highlight how far short philosophy falls from the comprehensive character of religious community.

On the temporal question, the issue is what role history, the past as past, plays in philosophy, and how we should be oriented in the present towards the future. This is the question of the history of philosophy, the philosophy of history, and their interrelation. Hegel clearly believes in a view of philosophy as constituted by its own history. This is not the antiquarian view that would be the correlate of the obsession with Jesus' miracles. Rather, it is a question of understanding how each system of the past contributed to the present, the kind of account that he gives in the lectures on the history of philosophy. He gives a history of philosophy that is a rational reconstruction of the path that has led to the actuality of the present.[20]

We might doubt at this point whether thinking of reason as evaluative really helps us understand philosophy as a practice proximate and superior to religion. We can say that philosophy is the pure conceptual domain, and thus does not operate in such modes, which are distinctive of religion's representational form. But then we have to confront the question of how philosophy really is superior to religion if it deals only in concepts that very few can comprehend and that do not appeal to the ordinary consciousness. Hegel's view seems to have the unappealing consequence of making philosophy the guardian of the Good, the embodiment of the best, even though philosophy does not seem to be in a position actually to change anything through its idealizing activity. It seems, furthermore, that philosophy

20 This has come to be known as 'Whig' history. For a defense of Hegel on this point, see Brandom, *A Spirit of Trust*.

is an *exclusive* discipline in the sense of making itself the only domain truly worthy of the highest activities of human spirit. He thus denigrates lower level practices for not having achieved the form of the Concept that hardly anyone can comprehend.

These concerns, while understandable, are overblown, and we can see why by returning to the Logic's treatment of the Absolute Idea, the concluding methodological discussion that follows upon his treatment of the Good. In terms of the parallels with religion, this is the place in the Logic where Hegel gives his pure logical account of God as spirit, uniting subjectivity and objectivity. He writes of the method as

> the absolute infinite force to which no object that may present itself as something external, removed from reason and independent of it, could offer resistance, or be of a particular nature opposite to it, and could not be penetrated by it.
>
> (SL 12.237; 737).

It might seem that the method cannot possibly meet the idea of God as spirit, but Hegel clearly means to equate them. Philosophical method deserves this status because it is not something applied from the outside by finite human thinking, but rather it penetrates every domain from within that domain itself, through that domain's inner dialectic. He thus continues,

> This is also the truer meaning of its *universality*; according to the universality of reflection, it is taken only as the method for all things; but according to the universality of the Idea, it is both the manner of cognition, of the concept *subjectively* aware of itself, and the *objective* manner, or rather the *substantiality of things*.
>
> (*SL* 12.238; 737)

As an evaluative method, it is not in the position of external teleology that aims to impose an interpretation on some domain. Rather, the method takes each domain on its own terms, and through the dynamics of the Concept sets out to reveal what the purpose of the domain is, and thus what defines the valuable within it. Not everything of course will meet the standard of inner purposiveness, but that just means that it has a subordinate reality within such purposiveness (as space and time do within the overall philosophy of nature), or that it really does fall into the class of things that are not worthy of philosophy and thus not valuable in general.

If we understand the Absolute Idea as the divine method through which evaluation unfolds within the various other domains, we can see an alternative, *inclusive*, way to think of the relationship between philosophy and religion. Rather than thinking that philosophy must somehow duplicate the forms of religious practice, or lamenting that philosophy is an impoverished conceptual shadow of vibrant communal practices, we should see

philosophy as *including* religion within the Absolute Idea. That is, after all, what Hegel says in the passage I cited in Section 15.1: 'there may be religion without philosophy, but there cannot be philosophy without religion, because philosophy includes religion within it' (*EL* 24; 12). Religion becomes a part of philosophy in so far as it is penetrated by the method, in so far as the philosopher lays out a philosophy of religion that shows the Concept and self-realizing freedom to be implicit in the practice. The same import (*Gehalt*), evaluative and reflexive, is operative in communities of faith as in philosophy properly understood.

The inclusive interpretation makes sense of what he says that the Absolute Idea 'has various shapes, and the business of philosophy is to recognize it in these. Nature and spirit are in general different modes of exhibiting *its existence*, art and religion its different modes of apprehending itself and giving itself appropriate existence' (*SL* 12.236; 735). Here are at least *four* modes of the Absolute Idea. In addition to the philosophy of nature,[21] there is the 'real' form of its existence in spirit, human thinking and agency in the real world of objects opposed to subjective activity (including both subjective and objective spirit), and two modes of its existence as absolute spirit (art and religion). It thus should be the case that all four modes share a basic rationality with philosophy. We do not have to choose between competing accounts, for philosophy shows that at their core they are all modes of the inner purposiveness of living freedom.

As an evaluative and metaphysical conception of reason, Hegel's method aims to separate what merely is from what is *actual*. In defending his infamous equation of actuality and rationality (the *Doppelsatz* from the *Philosophy of Right* Preface) at the outset of the *Encyclopedia*, Hegel invokes the evaluative to defend against misconstruals of the claim as the justification of anything that happens to be. He writes:

> *What is rational, is actual, and what is actual, is rational.*
> These simple propositions have seemed shocking to many and they have been attacked, even by those who are not ready to renounce the possession of philosophy, and certainly not that of religion. In the present context, we do not need to discuss religion, since the doctrines of the divine governance of the world [*göttliche Weltregierung*] express these propositions quite definitely. But as far as their philosophical meaning is concerned, we have to presuppose that the reader has enough education to know, not just that God is actual – that he is what is most actual, that he alone is genuinely actual – but also (with regard to the formal aspect) that quite generally, what is there

21 See Sebastian Rand, 'Hegel's *Philosophy of Nature*,' in *The Oxford Handbook of Hegel*, edited by Dean Moyar (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 384–406, for an excellent reconstruction of the philosophy of nature project.

> is partly *appearance* and only partly actuality. In common life people may happen to call every brainwave, error, evil, and suchlike 'actual,' as well as every existence, however wilted and transient it may be. But even for our ordinary feeling, a contingent existence does not deserve to be called something-actual in the emphatic sense of the world; what contingently exists has no greater value than that which something-*possible* has; it is an existence which (although it is) can just as well *not be*.
>
> (*EL* §6R)

Hegel connects the *Doppelsatz* to religion here with the aid of Fichte's transformation of the postulates of practical reason. The very essay that led to Fichte's dismissal on charges of atheism is Hegel's touchstone for linking the 'divine government' of the world to the rational and actual God. In that text Fichte argued that faith in divine government is expressed through doing one's duty without regard to consequences. In Hegel, this claim becomes the idea that ethical life, the life of a State, is the actual location of rational action if that State meets the conditions of living actuality, freedom, etc. The task of philosophy is to locate what is actual rather than what is merely possible. The latter he says has 'no greater value' than something that just as well might *not be* as be. In other words, the *Doppelsatz* is a methodological point that what we identify as rationality is what is valuable in the existing world, and that conversely what we reconstruct as rational is what has proven to be valuable, to have actuality in the present.

While religion also seems to stand above the practices of ethical communities, Hegel insists that it does not float free from those practices. It arises from, and is partly answerable to, the evaluative activities in mundane social and political contexts. He writes,

> Genuine religion and genuine religiosity only issue from ethical life: religion is that ethical life rising to think … Only from ethical life and by ethical life is the Idea of God seen to be free spirit: outside the ethical spirit therefore it is vain to seek for true religion and religiosity.
>
> (*EPS* §552R)

Hegel's claim here works because he holds that ethical community itself *is divine*. This claim allows him to argue against Catholicism that there should not be any split between ethical and religious authority. He writes,

> *Sittlichkeit* is the divine spirit as indwelling in self-consciousness, as it is actually present in a people [*Volkes*] and its individual members. This self-consciousness, going into itself from out of its empirical actuality and bringing its truth to consciousness has, in its *faith* and in its *conscience*, only what it has in the *certainty* of itself, in its spiritual

> actuality. The two are inseparable: there cannot be two kinds of conscience, one religious and another ethical, differing from the former in import and content [*Gehalte und Inhalte*].
>
> (§552R)

In this case the evaluative dimension, the 'import' of conscience, is clearly something over and above the 'content' of conscience. The critique is of a religious conscience, guided by the father-confessor, that could both issue different verdicts than the community's ethical standards and that could be seen as of higher value than those standards. We should read the 'going into itself … and bringing its truth to consciousness' as the seeking of principled justifications for empirical actuality. In faith and conscience we frame that actuality in rational or providential terms, thereby setting it within an evaluative framework that is more universal. His point is that true religious faith is inseparable from ethical practice, for religion on Hegel's view is actual, not an otherworldly beyond accessible only to a select priesthood. The Catholic priesthood serves as an *exclusive* counter-image to the inclusive method of philosophy. Hegel criticizes the Catholic church for separating religious value from worldly value and for setting up a select priesthood as having exclusive authority to evaluate actions. The contrast of Catholicism and Protestantism returns us to the issue of the separation of a class of priests from the 'laity' (from the letter to Niethammer).

What emerges clearly from the above claims about the relation of religion and philosophy to ethical life is a certain *primacy* or *centrality* of ethical practice. In the *Doppelsatz* and in the claim that true religion arises out of an ethical life bearing the same content and import, Hegel clearly means to emphasize that the evaluative domains of Absolute Spirit do not float free of first-order ethical and political evaluation. They are higher in a sense, and can be conceived (loosely) as a second-order evaluation of the first-order evaluative practices (evaluating the ethical evaluations of Objective Spirit), but they do not thereby attain the authority to intervene directly in the first-order realm. Philosophy provides the best rational account of the best practices of its social order, but it does not replace that order. The lesson of the critique of Catholicism is that free individuals need to express themselves directly in ethical action, and take responsibility for those actions, without having to (or getting to) rely on some other authority that stands outside the individual's own capacities for rational evaluation.

15.5 Reflexivity and Modern Freedom

Can the evaluations of philosophy and religion serve as a standard for correction and critique, or are they barred from this role because their evaluations are too closely tethered to the existing ethical and political norms? This question can be reformulated as a question about the *inclusive* reading of the method. If philosophy's method has to demonstrate the goodness

(i.e. self-realizing universal freedom) of each of the domains that are below it, and if those accounts have to be sensitive to the history of the domain, doesn't that tether philosophy too closely to existing historical shapes and render toothless its claim to locate what is genuinely good rather than simply conventionally good? The same point holds of religion, which cannot serve as a force of social change if it must already conform to existing norms (it seems that religious consciousness must agree with ethical consciousness). What good, finally, is the extra level of reflexivity, evaluation and idealization in Absolute Spirit if it must fundamentally agree with ethical practice?

The answer to this question turns ultimately on Hegel's conception of *modern* freedom and its realization in the particularity of individual human beings. Philosophy, religion and ethical life all give precedence to the universal in evaluation, and yet they all have a tendency to misunderstand that universality as abstract or external. The external universal is a conception of universal political power as putting the good of the whole over the good of individuals (think of Creon in *Antigone*), and in modern politics the main misconstrual is the abstract equality demanded by Robespierre in the French Revolution. The great challenge of expressive modern freedom is to integrate the particular into the universal and to see how both sides are sustained in the actions of individuals within a stable form of life. Hegel's domain of 'Morality' in 'Objective Spirit' (the central section of the *Philosophy of Right*) lays out the view of subjectivity that is supposed to bind individuals *in their particularity* to the universal. The trouble is that subjective reflection on its own, as individual, has a tendency to usurp the authority of social practice. That extra reflexivity must be diverted in part to the idealizing practices of Absolute Spirit, for in these practices the self-authorization of reason does not directly endanger the objectivity of law. We can consume hyper-reflexive fiction and reflect on the godliness of each person without thinking we are above the law. The practices do have as one of their functions, however, that of reinforcing allegiance to the ethical. This is mainly because that ethicality is itself only sustainable if individuals freely identify with it *in their particularity*, so that without an extra level of affirmation our institutional life would be in constant danger of fragmentation. Absolute Spirit can play both roles – expressing the heights of reflexivity and reconciling us to the ethical world – through that trinitarian structure that I laid out in Sections 15.2 and 15.3. My final step in this paper is to show how Hegel utilizes that structure in his final reflections about ethics, religion and philosophy.

Hegel outlines the dynamic of external and reflexive freedom, and the role of Christianity in making the individual the locus of value, in his reflections on Plato's *Republic* in E §552. Hegel admires Plato for his elevation of the Idea to political power, where the Idea is '*in itself* the free self-determining thought' (*EPS* §552), but he criticizes Plato for bringing the Idea to consciousness only 'in the most abstract form' (*EPS* §552). Presumably he means to criticize the Idea of the Good for its abstraction. Hegel argues

that a contrasting Aristotelian view of conceptuality shows the *need for* and the *path to* a more concrete interrelation of state, religion and philosophy. Hegel introduces the *reflexive element* of freedom as the human import [Gehalt], the fact that human beings are what they are for themselves, to indicate the deficiency of Plato's universality. Because of our reflexive, 'for itself' moment, humans (unlike other animals) cannot simply be subsumed under a substantial universal. He writes,

> The *human import* [Gehalt] by contrast is the free spirit itself and comes in its self-consciousness to existence. This absolute import [*Gehalt*], the spirit concrete in itself, is just this, to have the form, thinking, itself as its content [*Inhalt*]. To the height of the thinking consciousness of this principle Aristotle ascended in his notion of the entelechy of thought (which is *νοῆσις τῆς νοῆσεως*), thus surmounting the Platonic Idea (the genus, or essential being).
>
> (*EPS* §552R).

The human and absolute import – *essence* would also be a good translation of *Gehalt* in the opening sentence – just is the reflexivity at the heart of free spirit. It is the basic orientation towards the grounds of one's own freedom, the thinking of one's own actions as one's own. Because Plato could only think of the genus, and not of this 'thought thinking itself,' and because the subjectivity Hegel is talking about here was appearing in Plato's Athens mainly in the guise of the sophists, as corruption, Plato insisted on the substantial philosophical state in which there was no family and no private property. The objectively good in the state could not be mixed with the subjective value or goods of individuals; the actuality was dictated by a rationality imposed by reason on the other parts of the soul and city.

Hegel finds the principle of true religion already in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, and he locates in Aristotle the same principle of reflexivity and subjectivity that makes Christianity the true religion. Hegel writes,

> But thought always—and that on account of this very determination [Bestimmung]—contains the immediate *being-for-self* of *subjectivity* just as much as it contains universality; the true Idea of the in-itself concrete spirit is just as essentially under the one of its determinations (subjective consciousness) as under the other (universality): and in the one as in the other it is the same substantial content. Under *this* [subjective] form, however, fall feeling, intuition, representation; and it is in fact necessary that in point of time the consciousness of the absolute Idea should be first reached and apprehended in this form: in other words, it must exist in its immediate actuality as religion, earlier than it does as philosophy.
>
> (*EPS* §552R)

Subjectivity involves both the universality and the immediacy of being-for-self. Being-for-self includes the affective and imaginative elements that Hegel associates with religion. The subjectivity in the moment of reflexivity gives religion a crucial role in generating the rational State. Plato faced the problem that polytheism was not a good fit for philosophy, so philosophy could only oppose it – by banning the poets from the city in the name of the universality of the Good. What was needed was a religion that could appeal to the subjective side of consciousness, that *affirmed* subjectivity (and the infinite value of each individual), and that could bind individuals *in their subjectivity* to the universal. This is what Hegel is talking about when he writes that until the true religion came into the world, the true principle of the state could not enter into actuality. (*EPS* §552R)

Hegel did think the state of his day shares what he calls 'the true principle' with Protestantism and speculative philosophy. The principle is common to the free will, Christian religious conscience and idealist philosophy. Here is his statement of this common import as he brings the discussion to a close:

> Only in the principle of the Spirit knowing its essence, *in itself* absolutely free and having its actuality in the activity of its liberation, does the absolute possibility and necessity exist that state power, religion and the principle of philosophy fall together into one, completing the reconciliation of actuality in general with Spirit, of the State with the religious conscience as well as with philosophical knowing.
>
> (§552R)

These forms of Spirit know their essence in the concept of freedom, and know their actuality as forms of the institutionalized Good that are the context for continual liberation. That there is a need for liberation – an ongoing need – is a reflection of our finitude, the whole range of particular elements that refract and embody our activity. The activity as actuality claim also reflects at a deep level Hegel's thesis that the Concept is essentially a reflexive evaluative process rather than an abstract universal. The ethical agent, religious believer and philosopher all know this principle as their own – the agent as righteousness and patriotism, the believer as faith and devotion, and the philosopher as reason and devotion to the method. All three are in the business of education and evaluation, identifying what is best, justifying the activity to each other.

Can we, finally, think of philosophy as a practice that could today serve the same spiritual function as religion? Hegel clearly thought that philosophy need not be opposed to religion. One can be both a member of a church and a philosopher. Though on Hegelian philosophical principles those two roles will best coincide with Protestant Christianity, I do not think that is the only way to be both. But the tension between religion and philosophy is difficult to contain given their shared status at the apex of spiritual practice.

For philosophy to appeal to the sensible, to subjective consciousness in its particularity, it does better to seek an alliance with art than with religion. Hegel himself showed us how to do this in his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, whose philosophical renditions of *Antigone*, *Diderot's Nephew* and Jacobi's *Woldemar* retain their power to this day. Philosophy can insist on the logic of life and the Good, as Hegel does, but only in actual life depicted in words and/or images can we bring the concepts to a level that relates the import, or significance, to our particular lives. Hegel also thought that philosophy finds much in common with ethical life because both are concerned with concepts and laws. At our historical moment, the alliance of philosophy and ethical life offers an even more direct way to show why philosophy is necessary. In the language of law, of rights, of justice, philosophy finds a natural terrain for its evaluation and systematization. In our practice of philosophy today, I would argue that an ethics-first, justice-first philosophy is the best way of highlighting the sense in which our thinking and arguing is always concerned with value. Philosophy can only really aspire to be like a church if it has a mission of social reform that allows us to say without irony that this world, the actual world, is a home for each and for all.

16 Hegel's Notion of Philosophy

The Concept-Based Unity of Self-Referential Universality and Differentiated Particularity

Sebastian Stein

> Therefore the activity of god,
> which surpasses all others in blessedness,
> must be contemplative;
> and of human activities, therefore
> that which is most akin to this
> must be most of the nature of [*eudaimonia*].
>
> —Aristotle[1]

Introduction

What sets Hegel's absolute idealism and its notion of philosophy apart from other philosophies? In the search for an answer to this question, much attention has recently been paid to the definitions of 'absolute idealism,'[2] its seemingly naturalist[3] or essentialist[4] commitment to 'the concept' and its contrast to Kant's and Fichte's (self-)consciousness-based and thus 'subjective' idealisms.[5] Responding to these interpretations, this chapter differentiates Hegel's idealism from other philosophical rivals by focusing on the fundamental role of his concept-metaphysics and the relationship between the notions of universality and particularity that they define. This shows by way of Hegel's discussion of philosophy that like some essentialisms (or 'naturalisms') and unlike subjective idealisms and empiricism, Hegel's absolute idealism is most fundamentally defined by universality's structure of 'self-reference' and thus by 'self-identity' as opposed to the 'relation to something other' or 'difference' that is associated with particularity.

However, in contrast to universality-based essentialism, absolute idealism is designed to integrate particularity's concern with difference into

1 Aristotle 2009: 197.
2 Moyar 2021: 49.
3 Cf. Pinkard 2012, Kreines 2015, Knappik 2016, Gabriel 2016, McDowell 1994.
4 Cf. Kreines 2015, Knappik 2016, Pinkard 2012, McDowell 1994.
5 Gabriel 2016.

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universality's self-referentiality without undermining the former. Hegel thus aims to retain both essentialism's ability to self-justify and subjective idealism's protection of particularity against a freedom-undermining universal.

This will be illustrated with reference to the four main features that define Hegel's account of philosophy: (1) the relationship between unconditioned truth and individual thinkers, (2) the philosophical architecture of the encyclopedic system, (3) Hegel's uniquely systematic meta-philosophy, that is his 'philosophy of philosophy' and (4) the relationship between philosophical truth's unconditionality and finite thinkers' conditions. These show that Hegel's concept-metaphysics structure the way in which his notion of philosophy unifies universal self-reference with particular otherness and grounds his claims that his idealism (1) represents self-comprehending, unconditioned truth whilst ensuring the autonomy of particular philosophers, (2) deduces its categorial contents from a single principle, (3) deduces its own notion of philosophy and thus proves the unconditional validity of philosophical knowledge and (4) is committed to a notion of unconditioned truth that is articulated by conditioned philosophers in specific historical, social etc. circumstances.

The chapter discusses these dimensions in sequence: the first section analyzes Hegel's notion of philosophy as an ideal, self-referential unity with its internal differentiation into *Geist* and nature, compares Hegel's account of the relationship between truth and thinkers to those of his essentialist-naturalist predecessors Aristotle and Spinoza and identifies Hegel's system's unified but differentiated categorial determinations as an expression of the one concept's self-developing singularity. This leads into the second section's discussion of Hegel's reasons for philosophically deducing the notion of philosophy and motivates the enquiry into how he argues that universal *Geist's* unconditioned truth can be comprehended by particular, historically situated thinkers. The third and final section returns to the comparison between Hegel and his essentialist predecessors but now draws on the analysis of 'the concept' to describe absolute idealism in an attempt to answer to the chapter's motivating question.

16.1 Hegel's Concept of Philosophy in Contrast to Aristotle and Spinoza

In the first and in the final paragraphs of the *Encyclopedia*, Hegel discusses his notion of philosophy. While the initial account does not lay claim to systematicity and resembles his more sporadic claims in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, the *Science of Logic* and elsewhere, the analysis that ends the *Encyclopedia* aspires to be the final word on what philosophy is:

> [Philosophy] is […] unified into the simple spiritual intuition and then elevated in it to self-conscious thinking. This knowledge is thus the thinkingly cognized concept of art and religion, in which the diversity

> in the content is cognized as necessary, and this necessity is cognized as free.
>
> (Hegel 2007: §572, 267)

Crucially, Hegel states that while it is partly true to think of philosophy as the activity of finite, historically situated thinkers that have intuitions, form representations[6] and finally comprehend concepts,[7] the *philosophical* definition of philosophy describes it as the self-comprehension of the unconditioned and universal truth – what Hegel calls 'the idea':

> The idea is the *adequate concept*, the objectively *true*, or the *true as such*. If anything has truth, it has it by virtue of its idea, or *something has truth only in so far as it is idea*.
>
> (Hegel 2010: 670)

The idea and thus truth is defined by self-adequacy in form of the dynamic unity of its two opposing dimensions subjectivity (the subjective concept) and objectivity (the concept as object):

> The *identity* of the idea with itself is one with the *process*; the thought that liberates actuality from the seeming of purposeless mutability and transfigures it into *idea* must not represent this truth of actuality as dead repose, as a mere *picture*, numb, without impulse and movement, as a genius or number, or as an abstract thought; the idea, because of the freedom which the concept has attained in it, also has the *most stubborn opposition* within it; its repose consists in the assurance and the certainty with which it eternally generates that opposition and eternally overcomes it, and in it rejoins itself.
>
> (Hegel 2010: 674)

This seems to place Hegel in opposition to individuality-focused thinkers of the same idealist tradition, such as Kant, Fichte and (partly) Schelling[8] insofar as these are committed to a notion of *irreducible* individuality: to them, philosophy is primarily something undertaken by individual thinkers.

In contrast, Hegel's account seems closer to those of the naturalist essentialists Aristotle and Spinoza, who define philosophy as the self-reference of a universal principle (called e.g. 'god,' 'substance,' 'nature' etc.) or as an individual's participation in such self-reference. For example, Aristotle defines philosophy as god's self-thinking (Aristotle 1984: 3643) in which

6 Cf. Gabriel 2020: 323ff.
7 Cf. Ferrarin 2020: 111ff.
8 Cf. Schelling 2005: 51.

the finite thinker can participate while Spinoza describes it as god's[9] self-reference (Spinoza 1994: Vp36: 260) of which the finite thinker is a part. It seems that to them and to Hegel, the philosophical activity of finite thinkers is an expression, instantiation or 'appearance' (Hegel 2007: §413, 142) of an unconditioned, all-determining, universal principle that is defined by self-referentiality.

16.1.1 Hegel vs. Spinoza and Aristotle

And yet, Hegel argues that Spinoza's 'objective' (Hegel 2010: 40)(i.e. 'naturalistic' or 'essentialist') account of philosophy unduly prioritizes the unconditioned universality of substance/nature/god over the particularity of the philosophical thinkers and thereby undermines the latter's reality.[10] Since the self-causing of Spinoza's god determines all finite entities ('modes') – and thus also the particular philosophers – it renders them conceptually redundant: in truth, 'they' are god so that philosophy is *only* god's self-reference and nothing else (Hegel 2010: 473). On Hegel's reading, this deprives god's universality of a conceptual means of contrast – and thus of its own determination as universality: Spinoza's supposedly universal god is *not* 'non-particularity' because all there truly is on god's ontological level is god's own universality. There is only god and everything that seems to not be god, is god.

Not only are all the thoughts of finite philosophers as determined as god is because they *are* it, thus undermining particular thinkers' self-determination, but in dissolving the particularity of the very entities it supposedly determines, Spinoza's god abolishes itself:

> [*A*]*bsolute indifference* may seem to be the fundamental determination of Spinoza's *substance*. […] [T]his is indeed the case to the extent that […] every further concrete differentiation of thought and extension, etc., are posited as vanished. It is simply a matter of indifference what anything might have looked like in existence before being swallowed up in this abyss of abstraction if one stops short at it. […] [S]ubstance ought not to remain Spinoza's substance, the sole determination of which is the negative one that everything is absorbed into it. Differentiation occurs with Spinoza quite empirically – attributes (thought and extension) and then modes, affects, and all the remaining. The differentiation falls to the intellect, itself a mode; the connection of the attributes to substance and to each other *says no more* than that they express the whole of substance, that their content, the order of things as extended and as thoughts, is this same substance.
>
> (Hegel 2010: 333)

9 That is substance's/nature's.
10 Hegel 2010b: 333.

From Hegel's point of view, Spinoza thus fails to appreciate that there can be no purely universal self-thinking – in the manner Spinoza attributes to god – that does not undermine particular philosophers' thinking activity and thus itself.

Meanwhile, Hegel maintains that Aristotle's notion of philosophy fails to explain how philosophers participate in god's self-comprehension (despite Aristotle's claims that they do) (Aristotle 1984: 3643). Since Aristotle begins with the difference between particular thinkers and universal god, universal god's self-thinking must remain something 'else' and thus inaccessible to the particular thinkers (Hegel 1986a: 150) and thinkers' participation in divine self-thinking becomes inexplicable: once thinkers and god are defined as different, no subsequent identity-claim can unite them and render their identity actual rather than merely possible (Hegel 1986a: 158):[11] we *can* think along with Aristotle's god but we never do. Despite Aristotle's claims to the contrary, his thinkers may thus *try* or *strive* to identify with god's self-thinking, but they cannot succeed. For the thinkers' participation in divine self-comprehension to be actual, their finite minds would have to turn out to *be* god's infinite mind (Hegel 2007: §577, 276).

To Hegel, Aristotle thus undermines the fundamental identity of god and thinker, when he avoids a Spinoza-style reduction of finite thinkers within god's universality. However, given Spinoza's problem of universality's self-undermining, Aristotle's caution seems understandable: if Aristotle's universal god and its self-thinking were first and then particular philosophers would be declared identical with it in virtue of their philosophical activity, the thinkers would ultimately *be* god, thus losing their particularity and along with it, their claim to self-determination or even existence.

Prioritizing god's universal self-thinking over the finite thinkers would mean that the thinkers' activity could be explained away with reference to god: in truth, their thinking would be god's and since god's self-causing is all there is, there would be no discernable, self-motivated activity by finite thinkers. Again, this would undermine god's universal status by depriving it of a means of contrast. While Hegel's Aristotle is able to avoid such reduction of the thinkers' particularity, he does so at the cost of undermining the identity between philosophers and god.

16.1.2 Hegel's Ideal Self-Reference

What is Hegel's constructive alternative to these essentialist[12] definitions of philosophy? How does he hope to balance the universal dimension that defines philosophy as god's self-reference and the thinkers' particularity? In the *Encyclopedia*, Hegel defines philosophy as a unity of universal and

11 Cf. Redding 2020.

12 or 'naturalist' insofar as Spinoza also calls god/substance 'nature' and Aristotle regularly appeals to 'nature' when describing the essence of things.

thus self-referential truth and particular thinkers. This unity is based on the structure of the aforementioned 'idea' and thus Hegel's definition of truth as such (Hegel 2010: 282). The idea, however, is defined as a form of what Hegel defines as the most fundamental, ontological principle that determines all thought and being. He calls it 'the concept':

> As the absolute form itself, [the concept] is every determinacy, but in the way that it is in its truth. Although it is abstract, therefore, it is also what is concrete, and indeed it is what is altogether concrete, subject as such.
>
> (Hegel 1991: §164R, 242)

…and…

> As the substantial might which is for itself, the Concept is what is free; and since each of its moments [universality, particularity and individuality] is the whole that it is, and is posited as inseparable unity with it, the Concept is totality; thus, in its identity with itself it is what is in and for itself determinate.
>
> (Hegel 1991: §160, 236)

The idea is generated by the concept when 'the subjective concept' actively turns itself into objectivity by negating itself and then unites itself with this objectivity to form the idea:

> The Idea is […] the absolute unity of Concept and objectivity. Its ideal content is nothing but the Concept in its determinations; its real content is only the presentation that the Concept gives itself in the form of external thereness; and since this figure is included in the ideality of the Concept, or in its might, the Concept preserves itself in it.
>
> (Hegel 1991: §213, 286)

The concept-based idea exists in the three distinct and mutually determining forms of the logical absolute idea, as the self-alienated idea as nature and as *Geist* that is the idea that has returned from and sublated its self-alienation:

> [T]he Idea shows itself as the thinking that is strictly identical with itself, and this at once shows itself to be the activity of positing itself over against itself, in order to be for-itself, and to be, in this other, only at home with itself. Hence, the science falls into three parts:
>
> I. The Logic, the science of the Idea in and for itself.
> II. The Philosophy of Nature, as the science of the Idea in its otherness.

> III. The Philosophy of Spirit, as the Idea that returns into itself out of its otherness.
>
> (Hegel 1991: 42)

Designed to track the idea's categorial shapes, the *Encyclopedia's* structure thus describes the three forms of the idea, arguing that the logical idea freely manifests as nature and *Geist* while these forms are required for determining the logical idea to be what it is: the logical idea is determined as logical because it is 'not-nature' *and* 'not-*Geist*.' Meanwhile, the idea as *Geist* is defined as 'not the logical idea' and as 'not nature' while the idea as nature is defined as 'not *Geist*' and as 'not the logical idea.' Since all three are forms of the idea, they are the same. However, they can only be the same *in* being three different determinations of the idea as their unifying principle (Hegel 1988: 417–8).

16.1.3 Absolute Idea and Philosophy

Hegel thus defines philosophy as the self-comprehension of the idea that traces its own categorial determinations within.[13] This notion of self-comprehension has the circular structure of the logical 'absolute idea' (Hegel 1991: §236ff, 303ff) that Hegel defines as self-referring unity of knowing subject and known object:

> As unity of the subjective and the objective Idea, the Idea is the Concept of the Idea, for which the Idea as such is the object, and for which the object is itself-an object in which all determinations have come together. This unity, therefore, is the absolute truth and all truth, it is the Idea that thinks itself.
>
> (Hegel 1991: §236, 303)

However, philosophy's ideal self-reference is more concrete than the logical idea's self-reference because 'philosophy' as a form of absolute *Geist* implies that the idea's forms of nature and *Geist* are part of this self-reference: where the *Logic's* absolute idea only comprehends itself as logical subject and object, philosophy's idea-based *Geist* comprehends itself as ideal and the idea as logical, natural and *geistig*. To Hegel, philosophy thus means that the idea in its form of *Geist* – or 'reason' –comprehends itself in its logical, natural and *geistige* forms:

> [The most concrete description of philosophy] is the Idea of philosophy, which has self-knowing reason, the absolutely universal, for its middle,

13 With regards to the deduction of the logic's content, see Nuzzo 2020: 161ff.

> a middle that divides into mind and nature, making mind the presupposition, as the process of the Idea's subjective activity, and nature the universal extreme, as the process of the Idea that is in itself, objective.
> (Hegel 2007: §577, 276)

Hegel argues this rendering of the relationship between idea, nature and *Geist* is able to explain *why* the thinkers as appearance of *Geist* can comprehend logic and nature although logic and nature are not *Geist*: logical idea, nature and *Geist* are intelligible to *Geist* because all three are expressions of the same principle, that is the idea. *Geist* and thus the finite philosophers as *geistige* thinkers can comprehend the logical idea, nature and *Geist* because all of these *are* idea.

This unity of the idea's three forms illustrates Hegel's reason *why* the logical idea posits itself as nature and as *Geist* in the first place: the relationship between the idea and its forms is itself concept-based. Just like the concept's universality negates itself to define particularity and negates this particularity to form individuality (Hegel 1991: §163, 239), the idea's immanent concept motivates it to freely negate itself and assume the form of nature to then negate nature to become *Geist* (Hegel 2010: §81). It thus follows from the idea's freedom that the idea exists as nature and *Geist*.[14] So while the idea is the one, singular ontological principle that defines reality, it freely does so in its forms as logical idea, nature and *Geist*. A truly *conceptual* (Hegel 2010: 132) comprehension of the idea's determinations as logical idea, nature and *Geist* thus provides the why-explanation regarding the ideas' forms.

Hegel's final philosophical description of the *Encyclopedia's* architecture is thus informed by the structure of the concept: the subjective concept freely turns itself into idea and the idea freely turns itself into nature and *Geist*. Within the overarching, ideal unity of the idea's three forms, the particularity of the forms is maintained: logical idea, nature and *Geist* are internal, particular moments of the overarching conceptual structure provided by the idea's self-reference. The particularization of the idea into logical idea, nature and *Geist* is thus an ideal self-differentiation so that Hegel's encyclopedic system embodies the concept-guided, internally particularized self-reference of the idea.

Since the concept defines the idea and *Geist* is one of the idea's forms, *Geist* is defined by the concept. This also extends to absolute *Geist* and its determination of 'philosophy': according to the individuality-based notion

14 This is Hegel's answer to the question why the logical idea turns into nature and *Geist* or, theologically speaking, why a perfect, self-contained god (his logical absolute idea) creates anything (and thus posits nature and *Geist*) at all: Hegel's god freely posits nature and Geist, it is part of god's own free structure to posit itself in those forms. God is free and therefore posits nature and *Geist*. Far from undermining explanation by appealing to *Willkür*, Hegel's god's 'freedom' thus takes the role of 'causality,' in the non-technical sense, for Hegel.

of philosophy, the universal dimension of *Geist* relates to particular philosophers in the same concept-based and thus 'free' manner in which the concept's universality relates to particularity when it forms individuality within which the system's ideal unity relates to its internal particularizations. The free relationship between universality, particularity and individuality within the concept thus also determines the relationship between the idea's logical, natural and *geistige* forms.

16.1.4 Absolute Geist and Finite Thinkers

This also defines Hegel's account of the relationship between finite philosophical thinkers and unconditioned truth. Given some of Hegel's claims about *Geist*, (Hegel 2008: 315ff) one may wonder whether he suggests that finite philosophers simply do what universal *Geist* does because *Geist's* universality is causally prior to their particularity? It seems that if this were the case, Hegel would have returned to a variety of what he might call Spinozist naturalism or essentialism, where finite thinkers are at best passive means and at worst unreal in the face of a presupposed, all-determining and ultimately self-undermining, universal principle such as god.[15]

However, Hegel insists on the reality and autonomy of particular thinkers in the face of *Geist's* universality and rejects any notion of their autonomy-undermining dependence (Hegel 2008: 315). Once again, this rejection has its roots in Hegel's concept-based account of the concept's 'free' causality (Hegel 2008: 28) in contrast to the 'necessity' (Hegel 2010; 473) he associates with Spinoza's substance/god/nature: to Hegel, the notion of 'dependence' implies that the difference between particulars (*geistige* thinkers (Hegel), modi (Spinoza)) and the universal principle (*Geist's* universality (Hegel), nature/god/substance (Spinoza)) is first and that the moments' identification comes second (ibid.).

In contrast, Hegel's concept-based *Geist* implies that the universal and the particulars are logically simultaneous and differ *in* their unity: each moment determines the other and each moment assumes the other's properties without losing its own. *Geist's* particular thinkers thus relate to *Geist's* universal dimension like particularity relates to universality in the logical concept:

> [The concept's] universal is what is identical with itself explicitly in the sense that it contains the particular and the [individual] at the same time. Furthermore, the particular is what is distinct or the determinacy, but in the sense that it is inwardly universal and is [actual] as something [individual]. Similarly, the [individual] means that it is subject, the foundation that contains the genus and species within itself and is

15 Cf. Ng 2020: 132ff.

> itself substantial. This is the posited unseparatedness of the moments in their distinction - the clarity of the [concept], in which each of the distinctions does not constitute a breach, or blurring, but is transparent precisely as such.
>
> (Hegel 1991: §164R, 242)

The concept's identity-based but difference-respecting individuality thus accommodates the difference between *Geist's* universality and finite thinkers as its particularity: they are universal *Geist* and universal *Geist* is them. *Geist's* universality assumes the properties of the particular thinkers and they assume its properties:

> *Geist* is as particular and thus as concretely manifest as the thinkers, particular thinkers are as self-determining as *Geist's* universality. The unity of these dimensions and thus *Geist's* true structure is the concept's individuality.
>
> (Hegel 2010: 514)

Universal *Geist's* unconditioned universality and the finite thinkers' conditioned particularity thus unite to define philosophy as *Geist's* self-comprehension: philosophy means that universal *Geist* comprehends itself, which in turn means that particular, *geistige* thinkers comprehend *Geist's* universality and their conceptual relationship to it. Since the thinkers are *Geist's* universality as much as *Geist's* universality is them, *Geist's* true individuality is universal and particular at once. With regards to philosophy, this entails that within *Geist's* free individuality, universal *Geist's* self-comprehension *is* the particular thinkers' and the particular thinkers' free self-comprehension is *Geist's*.[16] According to individuality, the particulars are as free as the universal, which is as determined as they are.[17]

In and through the finite philosophers' activities, the idea as absolute *Geist* thus comprehends itself in its purely logical, natural and *geistige* forms. They enable it and at the same time they participate in *Geist's* self-comprehension so that *Geist's* self-comprehending activity articulates itself in their self-conscious acts of thinking:

> [Philosophy] is also unified into the simple spiritual intuition and then elevated in it to self-conscious thinking. This knowledge is thus the

16 Cf. Hegel 2007: §385, 20 & §387, 25.

17 Amongst others, Hegel uses the expression 'appearance' (Hegel 2007: §577, 276) to invoke the representation of how 'particular philosophical thinkers relate to *Geist's* universality. Strictly speaking, 'appearance' in its technical sense from the logic of essence (Hegel 2010: 418ff) is inadequate to describe *Geist* because appearance suggests that the particular thinkers relate to *Geist's* universality as a presupposed, universal 'ground' (cf. Hegel 397ff).

> thinkingly cognized concept of art and religion, in which the diversity in the content is cognized as necessary, and this necessity is cognized as free.
>
> (Hegel 2007: §572, 267)

In doing philosophy, the idea as *Geist* and thus the particular philosophers comprehend the idea as nature and as logical 'absolute idea' because all of these are forms of the one idea. And since the idea is universal, the same truth is comprehended by differing, particular thinkers. Furthermore, the property transfer from *Geist's* universal dimension to the particular thinkers and vice versa within the concept's individuality entails that the self-determination rooted in *Geist's* universality enables the particular thinkers to think and decide autonomously: their particularity is imbued with *Geist's* universality's and thus incorporates its unconditional self-determination while universality is concrete thanks to particularity. As parts of *Geist's* individuality, particular philosophers are determined *and* self-determining.[18]

So despite their finitude and determinacy that is rooted in their bodies, their psychology, their historical station and all other empirical factors, the thinkers are also irreducibly self-determining and thus in control of their thoughts and actions: they could always think and do otherwise (Hegel 2008: 32ff). This extends to the decision to think philosophically or not (Hegel 2010: 29): in all given circumstances, the particular philosopher is in principle free to think philosophy's unconditioned truth or to not do so.

To Hegel's mind, this concept-based account of philosophy places him in stark contrast to essentialism and thus naturalism since the ability of Hegel's particular philosophers to decide is neither undermined by a universal principle's overriding causal power nor are his finite philosophers first differentiated from and thus ignorant of universal truth before being united with it in the manner Aristotle suggests. Instead, the universal dimension of Hegel's *Geist* and the particular thinkers as *Geist's* particular dimension are simultaneous so that thinkers and universality constitute each other at once whilst retaining their categorial determinacy within individuality (Hegel 2008: 33ff).

This also explains Hegel's rejection of the notion that the universal principle 'uses' particulars as mere object-like means: the universal dimension of *Geist* cannot 'use' finite thinkers as this would imply that the universal dimension and the particular thinkers are fundamentally different. Something can only be used by something else if both are not always already the same. If they were the same, the principle would use itself, which contradicts the notion that the tool depends on the user.

The individuality-based identity of thinkers' particularity and *Geist's* universality thus entails that when the thinkers decide to think what they do, it *is* universal *Geist* that determines itself. Or, speculatively equivalent,

18 Cf. Yeomans 2020: 379ff.

when universal *Geist* determines itself, the particular thinkers decide to think what they think (ibid.). Since the particular thinkers *are* the particularity of *Geist's* universality and universality is their ability to self-determine, their doing is its doing and vice versa. Within this equivalency, the finitude of the particular thinkers and *Geist's* universality remain distinguishable: a finite thinker is not all of *Geist* nor is all of *Geist* a particular thinker albeit it might be more self-comprehending in some particular thinkers than in others because some are more willing to think along with *Geist*.

16.1.5 Geist*, Thinker and Essentialism*

With regards to essentialism, Hegel thus agrees with Spinoza that particular thinkers and universal truth are always already united by an identity. At the same time, Hegel concurs with Aristotle that the particular thinkers do not lose their particularity in the self-thinking activity of universal truth (Aristotle's god and Hegel's *Geist*). However, Hegel rejects what he sees as Spinoza's reduction of particular thinkers to universal nature's or god's self-reference (Hegel 2010: 333). And Hegel opposes Aristotle's insistence on a presupposed and thus identity-undermining difference between particular thinkers and god's self-thinking (Hegel 1986a: 158).

Hegel's concept of philosophy is thus designed to accommodate the differentiation and relationality of the thinkers' particularity with universal god's/truth's identity and self-reference: philosophy is universal truth's self-reference *and* accommodates the particularity (and thus difference) of finite philosophers. Truth's universality-based self-reference and thinkers' particularity-based difference are/is one in being two.

How does Hegel deduce his notion of individuality-based *Geist* that serves as a foundation for his claims about the relationship between universal truth and particular thinkers? According to Hegel, the concept also defines another dimension of philosophy. This is the description of what philosophy's three major categorial determinations – the logical idea, nature and *Geist* – consist in and how they are connected. According to Hegel, the concept's unity of self-reference and otherness thus also defines the *method* with which different determinations within the encyclopedic system of philosophical knowledge are deduced.

16.1.6 The Concept and Systematic Unity

He calls the unifying principle that informs the *Encyclopedia's* categorial sequence 'the concept's "self-development"' (Hegel 2010: 46 §18): each philosophical category is true insofar as it represents a categorial form that the concept assumes.[19] This also implies that every determination that falls

19 Re. the *Geist*-based claims about rational economics, cf. Boldyrev 2020: 410ff.

short of the circular system's most concrete determination 'philosophy' is in some way inadequate by the concept's development-driving, immanent standard (Hegel 1991: §9, 33). Throughout the system, the concept thus strives to determine itself as 'philosophy' and every determination that emerges on its way there falls short of that inner purpose. Thus understood, every determination 'should' be philosophy, but is not.

For example, the idea's most abstract determination as 'indeterminate being' (Hegel 2010: 59) is as much an attempt by the concept to realize philosophy's self-comprehension as are the determinations of time, space, mechanics, physics, organics, subjective and objective *Geist*. Given its internal purpose, each form is *supposed* to be concept-based *Geist's* philosophical self-comprehension. But because none of them is, the concept continues its categorial self-determining activity.

Since it is the concept's development that defines and unifies the circular, encyclopedic system of categorial determinations, they all lay claim to the same unconditional validity that is assigned to the concept (Hegel 1991: §14, 38). So while the *Encyclopedia's* categories *are* the concept and thus express its unconditional truth, they are also *not* sufficiently true insofar as they fail to be 'philosophy.' However, given the encyclopedic system's circular form, it might be inappropriate to call philosophical self-comprehension the 'final' purpose of the concept. Just as there is no end or beginning on a circle (Hegel 1991: §17, 41), the notion of 'final purpose' misleads if it is taken to suggest that there is an end to be reached in a linear manner. [20]

16.1.7 Method and Categories

In contrast to essentialism, the concept's self-developing activity thus also defines philosophy's method (Hegel 1991: §243, 307). Its development is supposed to ensure the validity of his philosophical claims. This explains Hegel's unique take on the notion of 'intellectual intuition' that features prominently in post-Kantian idealism.[21] To Hegel, intellectual intuition is a necessary dimension of philosophical thought (Hegel 2007: 267).

However, on its own, such intellectual intuition is insufficient. It stands in need of mediation and thus the deduction of its claims. The relationship between the concept's development and the categorial shapes that intellectual intuition defines thus entails that an immediate, correct intellectual intuition

20 The motivation for the further development of each category can be represented by a question. The *Encyclopedia's* most concrete category 'philosophy' could thus be said to lead back to the most abstract category 'undetermined being' via the question 'what is the content of philosophical knowledge?' The system thus 'returns' to the *Logic's* beginning and thereby establishes that the finite thinker who follows the system's categories in a linear way has been 'doing philosophy' in the sense of 'thinking along with the concept's self-comprehension' all along.

21 Cf. Stein (forthcoming).

about a certain categorial shape that provides the content or determination of thought alone does not establish its philosophical value. For example, should the category of 'self-consciousness' (Hegel 2007: §418, 142) and its content be grasped correctly, it must still be shown to relate to other conceptual shapes via their participation in the concept's self-development to count as philosophically justified. To Hegel, philosophically deducing or mediating (Hegel 1991: §19, 45) the philosophical categories that intellectual intuition produces thus amounts to placing them on the concept's developmental trajectory.[22]

The *Encyclopedia's* philosophical knowledge aspires to be both: it is 'immediate' in the sense that it consists of different, determined and immediately intellectually intuited categories. At the same time, however, these must also be 'mediated' by showing that they result from the same self-developing activity of the concept. Within the system, the concept's overarching self-identity thus mediates its internally differentiated, immediate categorial differences.

To know philosophically thus means to know the conceptual content of an immediate intellectual intuition *and* to know that and how this content stands in an identity-based relationship to other conceptual determinations. Philosophical knowledge thus consists of knowledge of 1) the 'what' of a category, that is its true, immediate and concept-based determination and 2) the 'how' the categories come about and where they lead, that is their mediation. The categorial shapes of philosophical knowledge matter, but so do their origins and purpose: without the concept's overarching identity, the particular determinations would be mere categorial (or 'dogmatic') assertions. And without the categories' particularity, philosophy would be void of determined content.

Hegel accordingly criticizes essentialism for lacking a proper concept-based method that guarantees the deduction of its intellectual-intuition based categorial insights:

> [Essentialism] regarded the thought-determinations as the fundamental determinations of things; and, in virtue of this presupposition, that the cognition of things as they are in-themselves results from the thinking of what is.
>
> (Hegel 1991: 66)

Hegel's essentialists thus think metaphysical truth directly, that is without considering that determinations such as 'substance,' 'soul,' 'god,' 'finite thinker,' 'attribute,' 'modus' etc. relate to each other via the concept's dynamic negativity and mutual determination:

> [Essentialism] is the naive way of proceeding, which, being still unconscious of the antithesis of thinking within and against itself, contains

22 Cf. The discussion of absolute method from the perspective of the *Logic's* 'life' in Ng 2020: 289ff.

> the belief that truth is [re]cognised, and what the objects genuinely are is brought before consciousness, through thinking about them. In this belief, thinking goes straight to the objects; it reproduces the content of sense-experience and intuition out of itself, as a content of thought, and is satisfied with this as the truth.
>
> (Hegel 1991: 65)

To Hegel, essentialism's experience-inspired but ultimately purely intellectual intuitions are thus presented as self-evident truths or as related to each other by some mode of presentation – but not in virtue of the concept's necessity – guaranteeing deductive movement. Instead, essentialism's particular categorial determinations lay claim to defining the truth's universality concretely but fail to show that and how their particularity and the truth's universality conceptually relate.

Hegel's concept thus not only defines the relationship between the truth and particular philosophers but also the relationship between its own categories: the concept's universal self-identity mediates its self-posited, particular determinations and thereby embeds the determinations' particularity within its own overarching, universal self-identity. The concept's universal self-reference thus accommodates the particular determinations' difference (i.e. 'otherness') while essentialism relies on the understanding and representational thinking to place them next to each other and then 'claims' rather than deduces that they relate via universality and thus a common unconditioned status. In contrast, the dynamic, determinations-creating universality of Hegel's concept brings forth the philosophical determinations as parts of itself: otherness is accommodated and preserved within self-identity.

16.2 The Concept and Metaphilosophy

How does Hegel justify that this is the right method and thus ensure the validity of the categorial determinations that he determines by tracing the concept? The concept-based methodological difference between essentialism and Hegel's idealism enables him to claim that while essentialism does not justify its own notion of philosophy, absolute idealism does: since essentialism does not properly deduce its own particular categorial determinations, it also fails to deduce a concept of philosophy and thus falls short of proving that philosophy is indeed unconditionally true knowledge.

However, what does Hegel's own proof of philosophical knowledge's unconditionality look like? Once again, his answer relies on the concept: he gives concept-based reasons why the body of concept-engendered, philosophical knowledge must deduce a definition of what 'philosophy' categorially is (Hegel 2007: §572, 267). Hegel thus argues that (1) philosophy describes truth's self-comprehension, (2) philosophy consists in immediate *and* mediated knowledge of this truth and (3) *philosophy must deduce that this is what it is and does*.

To him, a philosophical system that aspires for completeness must thus philosophically prove that a suitable definition of philosophy is part of the system of philosophical knowledge. The system thus contains philosophical knowledge about philosophy so that the philosophical thinker philosophically knows what philosophy is. Hegel argues that this is achieved by showing that the body of philosophical knowledge contains and thus deduces a category of philosophy that follows from the development of the concept in the same manner as all its other categorial determinations: philosophy must justify itself by deductively placing an account of itself within its own domain of concept-based, philosophical knowledge (Hegel 2007: 267).

What motivates this seemingly meta-philosophical approach? Hegel argues that if philosophy did not define and prove its own categorial meaning, it would not know itself philosophically and thus fail to prove to itself that it is unconditioned knowledge. This amounts to falling short of establishing that its own status as unconditioned knowledge is part of the very unconditioned truth that it is philosophy's task to describe. Without the philosophical proof of philosophy, it would not be established that *it is unconditionally true that philosophy articulates unconditioned truth*.

Failure to do so thus threatens to undermine philosophy's own necessity and truthfulness: unless proven otherwise, philosophy's knowledge *might not* be unconditionally true. This would undermine the standing of all other philosophical categories as they represent the very knowledge that is now questionable: if philosophy is not proven to be unconditionally true, it might be false, which would undermine the status of all philosophical claims. So as long as it is not proven that philosophy is indeed truth's self-knowing, a sceptic could legitimately doubt it.

The failure to philosophically deduce the category of philosophy would also affect the epistemic standing of the finite philosopher: unless philosophy is conceptually proven to be the self-comprehension of truth, the philosopher would not philosophically know that philosophy is true and that he is thinking unconditional truth when he thinks philosophically. As long as it is not proven to the thinker that philosophy truly is truth's self-reference, he does not know so that to him, philosophy might not be truth's self-reference after all.

This notion can be described in form of a syllogism:

(1) Philosophical knowledge is unconditionally true and known to be so
(2) Philosophical knowledge is known as true only if it is philosophically proven

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(C) Philosophical knowledge must be philosophically proven

Since (1) can only be proven by philosophy, philosophy must prove itself.

Another manner of describing this is with reference to the concept of knowledge. If knowledge is a relationship between a subject and an object,

and philosophical knowledge is supposed to the unconditionally true, both subject and object must have the status of unconditionality and truthfulness: the subject must not err and the object must be true content.

Were this not the case, it would be possible that either the subject of knowledge is merely particular and thus opinionated, biased, prejudiced, confused etc. or that the object is but a merely particular content, which, by definition, could be otherwise. In both cases, knowledge's unconditionality would not be conceptually guaranteed and it could be the case that what seems to be philosophical knowledge is just opinion. So only if philosophy proves that it is an unconditionally true and thus unerring subject that knows about an unconditionally true object, its status as truth is secured (Hegel 2007: §572, 267). Similarly, if philosophy is proven to be true and this proof is part of philosophy, the proof's status as being truthful is proven along with philosophy's other claims.

In contrast, should the proof not be part of philosophy, the proof could be questioned and would fail to establish the necessity of the very truth it implies and that it attempts to establish. If a philosophical thinker knew philosophical determinations without knowing that they represent unconditioned knowledge, the known determinations would not be false. But they would be questionable to the thinking subject. This means that the subject lacks the status of having unconditional knowledge and does not participate in the unconditioned truth that is required for guaranteeing the unconditioned status of philosophical knowledge: if the subject knew unconditioned truth, it would not doubt. Doubting philosophical truth thus implies that the doubting subject is already detached from unconditioned truth and epistemologically counts as a merely particular subject rather than a particular subject that participates in and knows unconditioned truth. And while self-critical, self-reflective questioning of one's philosophical commitments is required to keep known truth alive and defendable, doing so incessantly without accepting truth's actual presence in thought is not unnatural but un-*geistig*.

This also entails that if philosophy wants to defend its own status as a description of unconditioned truth, it has to prove this status: philosophy must show that its own categorial definition as unconditioned truth's self-comprehension is part of philosophy. In other words, it must prove that it knows that it is unconditioned truth. To do so, philosophy has to contain a philosophy of philosophy. Philosophical statements are thus justified in virtue of their forming part of a philosophical system that is proven to be truth's self-comprehension. So insofar as Hegel's claims about logic, nature and *Geist* in the *Encyclopedia* do manage to track the idea's unconditioned truth, they are justified in virtue of being part of philosophy, which in turn proves to itself to be self-comprehending truth.

This also applies to the deduction of philosophy itself: the category of philosophy is defined as true because it is part of philosophy and thus part of truth's self-comprehension. Insofar as its deduction is correct, it is established as unconditionally true and it is known that philosophy

is unconditioned truth's self-comprehension.[23] Comprehending Hegel's analyses in the *Encyclopedia* as philosophical knowledge thus includes the knowledge that philosophy incorporates its own philosophically justified meta-philosophy.

While this reasoning is circular, Hegel would argue that it represents the only kind of knowledge that lives up to the standard of unconditionality: ultimately, only the concept in the form of *Geist* can justify itself philosophically and only the concept can know itself because the concept is unconditioned truth. The concept is thus the sole criterion for guaranteeing the unconditionality of knowledge and thus for itself: only the truth can comprehend and judge the truth. Thinking along with the concept's definition of philosophy thus means that the philosopher comprehends that the concept is the only possible criterion, object and subject of truth. And the thinker's comprehension is justified because it embodies the unconditioned concept that – in its form as *Geist* – comprehends itself (Hegel 2007: §577, 276).

Accordingly, such 'meta-knowledge' about philosophy is itself conceptual: it is true, self-referential knowledge held by a knowing subject about a known object. The subject is active *Geist*, the object are the idea's categorial forms. At the same time, subject and object are the same: since *Geist* is a form of the idea, both subject and object of knowledge are the idea. In line with the concept's overarching self-referential structure, the *Encyclopedia* as a system of philosophical knowledge thus aims to form a *virtuous* circle that contains the definition of 'philosophy' as an irreducibly differentiated aspect of its content.

To Hegel, doing philosophy properly thus includes knowledge of what philosophy *is*, what it says and how it says it. His philosophical thinker is expected to (1) be familiar with the concept's differentiated categorial determinations, (2) know that they are of the concept and thus deductively connected by it and (3) know that the knowledge that this affords, is unconditioned truth's self-comprehension: Hegel's philosopher ought to have philosophical knowledge that contains a philosophically proven philosophy of philosophy.

16.2.1 Philosophical Self-Justification and Regress

Does this allow for the notion of a higher-order justification for philosophy's definition as truth's self-knowing? Does Hegel's meta-philosophy require further justification, which needs to be justified itself etc.?

23 This also highlights a difference between philosophical knowledge and other kinds of knowledge: e.g. mathematical knowledge does not need to philosophically prove its own truthfulness to be accepted as true by its practitioners. However, if one wants to philosophically establish that and how mathematical knowledge does communicate truth, a philosophical proof of mathematical knowledge would be needed.

Hegel argues against such a regress. When his thinker comprehends that philosophy is unconditioned truth's self-comprehension and the thinker participates in it, it is at once understood that a higher-order justification is impossible. Hegel's philosophically knowing thinker comprehends that he is part of and participates in unconditioned truth's self-knowing. And when the truth knows itself in the self-conscious thinker, it is understood that a higher-order knowledge or assurance is impossible. Once achieved, philosophy's self-knowing truth can thus not be reasonably questioned because both knowing subject and known object are the truth and known to be so by the self-conscious thinker. Doubt and demand for further assurance would then betray a lack of knowledge. Due to the speculative unity of particular thinker and universal *Geist*, it is also *Geist's* universality that does not question but accept itself as it truly is so there is no need for further reasons within the *geistige* thinker's mind.

This also implies that there is not a more truthful point of view left from which to question true philosophical knowledge. So when finite thinkers question actual philosophical truth from their own, particular and reflexive perspective, they do so from *outside* of the realm of universal truth's self-knowing. When particular thinkers criticize true, philosophical knowledge, their particularity is situated outside the concept-based self-comprehension of absolute *Geist's* concrete universality. In that case, the thinker's particularity is not a difference within *Geist*'s self-identity but a difference outside of it.[24] The truth-questioning thinkers' particularity thus contradicts *Geist's* self-reference instead of participating in it, which disqualifies them as reasonable critics of truth.

When a particular thinker demands a further reason to have justified what already is unconditionally true, he is thus disconnected from truth's self-knowing and has ceased to do philosophy: the truth is in question to him *because* he is outside of it. He fails to see that every further, truth-tracking justification can only confirm what is already proven by thinking along with philosophy's self-knowing truth: that philosophy *is* truth's conceptual self-knowing and beyond it, there is no higher-order knowledge. Once philosophical truth is identified, defined as self-knowing truth and the thinker properly comprehends it as such, the need for further justification ceases (Hegel 2007: §577, 276). In contrast, the thought of a thinker that is informed by truth is in harmony with self-knowing *Geist's* universality: the particular thinkers' particular knowledge is as unconditioned and thus universal as the truth itself because the thinker's thought *is* universal, self-knowing truth, only in particular form.

The structure of the concept thus also defines Hegel's concept of (meta-) philosophy: when Hegel argues that there is an overarching philosophical

24 Although there might be an absolute perspective from which the moral and ethical errors of particular agents and thinkers ultimately contribute to the self-realization of *Geist*.

system within which the notion of philosophy is a particular categorial determination, he differentiates between (1) philosophy as universal system and (2) philosophy as a particular determination within this system. Philosophy is thus the universal that engenders all valid categorial determinations *and* it is the particular determination of 'philosophy.' The categorial determination 'philosophy' is but one of many particular determinations of philosophy as the universal concept's self-reference. And yet, by defining the universal, the particular category 'philosophy' also defines what all other particular philosophical determinations are instances of.

The particular categorial determination 'philosophy' as part of the philosophical system thus differs from philosophy as totality of the system: the determination 'philosophy' is not 'all of philosophy and its determinations.' While the philosophical system as a whole defines a variety of different categories, the particular category of philosophy only defines one of the shapes of absolute *Geist*. And yet, both philosophy as such and the particular category of philosophy are the same insofar as the determination 'philosophy' is a particular instance of 'philosophy as such' *and* the determination defines philosophy as such. The category 'philosophy' thus *is* philosophical knowledge as much as all other determinations of philosophy are what the category 'philosophy' defines them to be.

Once more, this parallels the relationship between universal and particular within the concept: the universal (philosophical knowledge as such) refers to the particular (the philosophical category 'philosophy') as to something else and yet, the particular also *is* the universal in particular form while the universal is a particular determination of the concept (Hegel 1991: §164, 241).

The relationship between the particular determination 'philosophy' and philosophical knowledge as such is thus itself conceptual: philosophy as universal system contains self-given, particular determinations amongst which the category 'philosophy' is one. Each particular categorial determination of philosophy is thus an instantiation of the concept as self-determining universal that defines the system's totality. At the same time, the particular determinations 'define' the universal by giving it concrete determinacy: without particular determinations, philosophy would be void of content. Amongst these content-providing determinations, 'philosophy' stands out due to its unique function of determining the universal's overall meaning: the particular determination 'philosophy' uniquely defines and gives determination to the meaning of the universal 'philosophical knowledge.'

Like the concept itself, Hegel argues, the body of philosophical knowledge with its category of philosophy is an internally differentiated and particularized, self-referential universal: the concept's universality defines the totality of philosophical categories while the particular category 'philosophy' justifies the entire system. This notion is unavailable to essentialism as it lacks access to the concept-based method of justification and thus fails to deduce a notion of philosophy as a particular and thus differentiated

category within the overarching, self-identical universality of the concept. Once again, Hegel's reliance on the concept differentiates him from essentialism.

16.2.2 Geist's *Unconditioned Truth and Potentially Conditioned Thinkers*

In contrast to essentialist accounts of philosophy, Hegel's concept-based justification of philosophy via a deduction of the category of 'philosophy' enables his philosophical thinkers to philosophically know what it is they are doing when they engage in philosophy. Hegel's successful philosophers thus obtain philosophical knowledge about the concept's internally differentiated universality and about the status of their own philosophical knowledge.

However, the contrast between philosophical knowledge's unconditionality and the ever-different conditions of particular philosophers gives rise to a problem: if thinkers are particular and conditioned by definition – for example by their historical, social, geographical etc. circumstance – how could they know and thus have their mind's content identified with unconditioned knowledge? How is the concept-based body of universal, yet determined, 'eternal' (Hegel 1986: 24) philosophical knowledge accessible to finite and thus mortal and conditioned thinkers? One might assume that such thinkers are at best capable of striving for knowledge or of reasoned opinion rather than of philosophical knowledge because their thinking is only as valid as the conditions that it depends on. In that case, all thought would be conditioned and be 'just particular' rather than being the universal in particular form.

According to his critics, Hegel's thought is a prime example of this: to them, he falls short of his own, seemingly essentialist standard of unconditionality and his analyses of Christianity, anthropology, nature, the family, of a bicameral parliament and of monarchy are often cited as examples of his intellectual debt to the ideological and historico-social conditions of his thought.[25] To such critics, Hegel was a child of his time like all other thinkers he was unable to overcome the prejudices of his Zeitgeist.[26] This diagnosis seems compatible with Hegel's own remarks about the relationship between philosophy and history:

> The teaching of the concept, which is also history's inescapable lesson, is that it is only when actuality is mature that the ideal [*das Ideale*] first appears over against the real and that the ideal grasps this same real

25 Pinkard 2012.
26 Cf. Wood 2017.

> world in its substance and builds it up for itself into the shape of an intellectual realm.
>
> (Hegel 2008: 15, 16)

Hegel seems to incriminate himself of failing the standard of unconditionality that he defines for philosophical thought: the seeming dependency of all thought on historical conditions entails that no philosophical account could lay claim to the unconditioned validity that it must lay claim to. Amongst other, potentially equally unsettling consequences, this appears to undermine the possibility of reasonable disagreement between thinkers. For example, if our contemporary philosophical perspective were to be as conditioned as Hegel's was, what could an adherent of his thought argue to criticize us or on what grounds could we criticize him? Each party could point to its specific conditions as grounds of justification and even if some of these coincide, such coincidence would be contingent and thus fall short of the necessity Hegel regularly attributes to all philosophical reasoning.[27] Such a notion of philosophy also seems to be self-undermining as a philosophical account of philosophy: the philosophical notion that philosophical knowledge is always historically conditioned would itself be historically conditioned and thus fall short of the universal validity it implicitly lays claim to. Most likely because of these and other ensuing problems, and in seeming contradiction to his claims about history and to avoid self-contradiction, Hegel remains adamant that the conceptual content of philosophy is unconditioned:

> [P]hilosophy aims to cognize what is imperishable, eternal and in and for itself; its purpose is the *truth*.[28]

It thus appears that Hegel wants both: the thinkers' historical situatedness and the unconditionality of philosophical knowledge and he seems to suggest that unconditioned truth can be manifest in the shape of the empirical conditions of thinking that affect the philosophers.[29] But how does Hegel ground this claim about the compatibility of conditioned thinkers and unconditioned truth?

Seemingly in the spirit of essentialism, he argues that when empirically situated philosophers think philosophically, they intellectually intuit unconditioned truth in virtue of the very unconditioned truth that always already resides within – and is thus present in the particularity of – themselves and their world (Hegel 1986: 24). His successful philosophers are able to recognize, comprehend and articulate unconditioned truth about themselves and

27 Cf. Hegel 1986: 24 footnote 10.
28 Hegel 1986b: 24.
29 Cf. Motroshilova 2020: 497ff.

the world because they participate in it as much as they take part in their own empirical and particular but truth-informed conditions (ibid.). Hegel's thinkers thus find the unconditioned truth residing within themselves and in their world's particular conditions. The universality-informed, particular in- and external conditions of thinking thus enable but do not guarantee the philosopher's discovery of unconditioned truth. Successful philosophical comprehension thus implies that particular but self-determining thinkers comprehend the unconditioned truth that they and their world always already participate in without distortion: particular philosophical thinkers choose to participate in truth's universal self-transparency.

This argument relies on Hegel's notion that philosophical truth is the unconditioned, concept-based idea as *Geist* (Hegel 2007: §377, 1) so that the thinkers and their world always already embody *Geist's* unconditioned truth, albeit in a specific historical, cultural, geographical etc. manifestation: the same universal *Geist* that defines universal philosophical truth is manifest in the particular thinkers and in their thought-internal and -external determinations – empirically speaking, to varying degrees of self-adequacy (Hegel 1986: 25, 26). When philosophers conceptually comprehend *Geist's* universal and thus unconditioned truth as it is manifest in their particular world and in themselves, they realize the *Geist*-based unity of the universal truth within themselves and their conditions (Hegel 1984: 13). Different thinkers might thus give different names to the concept's categorial forms, use different arguments and languages and argue from different psychological, social and historical contexts. And yet, despite these differences, *Geist's* truth is the same for all thinkers at all times. However, this also entails that untrue, *merely* particular historical conditions may distract philosophers from *Geist's* universal truth (Hegel 2008: §1R, 17). Philosophical thinkers thus philosophically err when they are misled – or choose to be misled – by merely particular conditions that do not articulate universal truth.

For example, the historical event of the Thirty Years' War might mislead a philosopher to think that ultimately, man is evil by nature. Or the empirically contingent but conceptually necessary rise of the modern state might enable some philosophers but not others to comprehend that – should this be the case – 'the state' is one of objective *Geist's* determinations and thus part of the unconditioned truth that a philosophy seeks to describe.

So while philosophy's truth is unconditioned, one and unchanging from truth's own perspective, it has to be contextually experienced, intuited, represented and finally comprehended from the perspective of finite, empirical and thus potentially conditioned philosophers: it is only when philosophy succeeds that the thinkers comprehend the unconditioned universal manifest in their own and their times' conditioned particularity.

The empirical conditions that affect philosophers are thus at best a particular embodiment of universality's unconditioned truth and at worst merely particular obstacles to individual *Geist's* self-comprehension. Particular conditions are either (universal) truth-informed or truth-deprived.

They may conceal truth and thus hinder philosophical comprehension or they may be expressive of truth and thus aid the thinker's philosophical endeavors. When philosophy succeeds, there is thus no truth-external conditioning of thinkers' thought by truth-opposing or truth-neutral, particular conditions: since truth-expressing conditions manifest the same truth that resides within thinkers and within their thought, no radical 'externality' or 'otherness' affects the thinkers. Successful philosophy's categories express determinations that are of and thus within the same universal truth.

From the truth's perspective, the world, the thinkers, history and the empirical circumstances of thought thus have to 'catch up' with the truth that constitutes its immanent, ever-present purpose and potential (Hegel 2008: §341ff, 315ff): from the philosophically informed, empirical perspective, certain particular thoughts, actions and times live up to the universal, immanent standard better than others at certain times and places. In this sense, unconditioned truth is unchanging while its historical manifestation is not: at a given time, historical facts and events may more or less live up to the unconditioned truth of objective *Geist*. And only when and insofar as they do, can they enable philosophers to comprehend them – while even the best conditions will not be seized by thinkers who decide to make wrong conceptual choices.

For example, Hegel argues that the institutional structure of the modern state has always been and always will be part of objective *Geist*'s unconditioned truth (Hegel 2008: 228ff) and its empirical, historical emergence was the condition for its philosophical comprehension by finite thinkers. From their point of view, the state had to historically manifest to be comprehended as part of truth. However, had it not yet manifested, it would still be part of objective *Geist*'s unconditioned truth and would be recognized as such by truth-tracking philosophers once and where it does manifest. And assuming that it is manifest, those thinkers who fail to comprehend its significance fall short of philosophy's standard.

16.2.3 The Criterion of Philosophical Thinking

This entails that when thinkers that are influenced by truth-external conditions fail to judge and comprehend true conceptual content, their thought is just 'theirs' instead of being the truth's *and* theirs. When they think and argue, they do so exclusively in their own name instead of channeling universal truth.

By contrast, philosophers who do comprehend and appropriately judge truth are not the sole authors of their thoughts and judgments. They think and judge in synchronicity with truth's – that is *Geist's* – concrete universality (Hegel 2007: §381 add., 9). This entails that whether particular thinkers correctly channel the truth or merely express convictions influenced by thought-distorting, contingent conditions, can only be correctly judged by thinkers who themselves think and judge in unity with truth (Hegel 2007: §577, 276). While the latter have philosophical knowledge, the former entertain opinions.

This also entails that seekers of philosophical truth who exchange with others about truth will recognize the same universality in the thought of others that they carry within themselves. It is thus everyone's participation in the same truth that enables mutual comprehension and those who do channel truth-tracking thought are able to pass valid judgment on philosophical propositions. This means that the unconditioned truth in its particular form in the thought of finite thinkers is the only standard by which to judge philosophical thoughts and propositions. The task of the philosophical thinker is accordingly to articulate the always already present, unconditioned truth and to judge in accordance with its requirements:

> The eternal Idea, the Idea that is in and for itself, eternally remains active, engenders and enjoys itself as [philosophy's] absolute [*Geist*].
> (Hegel 2007: §577, 276)

Or, put differently, the particular thinkers ought to decide to judge in synchronicity with universal truth by adapting their thinking to truth's universality and in so doing actively enable truth's conceptual articulation. Finite thinkers must thus spontaneously decide to begin and sustain the thinking of unconditioned truth in an ongoing effort to keep merely particular distractions at bay (Hegel 2008: 17).

When such comprehension takes place, Hegel argues, all subjective doubt regarding truth is revealed as being merely subjective, contingent and thus to be error (Hegel 2008: 17). And insofar as there is doubt about the truth, it is just the thinkers' and not the truth's: when thinkers doubt the truth, the subject of thinking is just 'them' as conditioned thinkers and not them as truth-channeling thinkers. While particular thinkers have to speak with the voice of truth to enjoy rational authority, universal truth requires the activity and decisions of particular thinkers to be thought and channeled at all.

16.2.4 World Independent Truth?

Hegel thus subscribes to a very similar philosophical project that he thinks his essentialist predecessors, including Aristotle and Spinoza, endorsed: conceptually tracking the one eternal, unconditioned truth (Hegel 2007: §408 remark, 115). However, his concept-metaphysics enable him to argue that particular conditions contain unconditioned, universal truth without losing their status of particularity and without undermining their unity with universality.

Still, Hegel's philosophical truth is 'independent' from finite, particular thinkers at least in this sense: irrespective of whether philosophical truth is empirically thought or not, its form and content are universally valid. The fact that philosophical truth needs particular thinkers and a historical time and location to be actualized, does not entail that its categorial content

depends on these in the sense of being conditioned by them. Philosophical truth's universality needs particularity to be manifest but this particularity does not condition universality, instead, it expresses it.

For purposes of illustration a representation-based thought experiment might be useful: should the natural and *geistige* universe empirically cease to exist, begin anew and mind-possessing beings come into existence once more – and Hegel thinks that they must, given that nature conceptually and thus eventually also empirically leads into *Geist* (Hegel 1986c: §376, 537) – such beings would discover the same philosophical categories that Hegel describes insofar as he identifies them correctly. Without empirical thinkers, philosophical truth would not be articulated. But the truth about what nature and *Geist* conceptually are, can be represented as existing 'in principle' that is as un-thought potential. From the truth's 'perspective,' it is indifferent and contingent when and where and how it is empirically thought. What remains necessary, however, is its categorial form.

Hegel's concept-based notion of philosophy thus combines an essentialist-naturalist commitment to truth's self-identity with particularity's moment of difference in a manner that ensures both moments' reality: to think philosophically means that particular thinkers freely decide to activate an ever-present potential for truth-tracking, intellectual intuitions and their deduction. To actualize this potential, thinkers have to self-consciously acquire conceptual knowledge by thinking through their experience, intuitions and representations, which all takes place in response to particular but universality-informed geographical, historical, cultural etc. circumstances (Hegel 1991: §3, 26): the potentially known philosophical truth has to be experienced, intuited, represented, thought through and comprehended to become actualized philosophical knowledge in thinkers' minds.

When this takes places, the concept's form defines philosophy yet again: particular philosophers along with their correctly comprehended, empirical circumstances and representations supply the particular content to unconditioned truth's universality. Universal truth thus self-sufficiently refers to itself in and through the thinkers' and their world's difference-supplying particularity and all elements together constitute philosophical truth's internally differentiated, self-referring individuality of absolute *Geist*.

16.3 Hegel and Essentialism Revisited

It is thus from the concept's perspective and its balance of particularity and universality within individuality that Hegel rejects essentialism's take on the relationship between universal *Geist* and particular thinker, philosophical justification (Hegel 1991: 65), lack of metaphilosophical justification (ibid.) and accuses it being unable to explain the unity of unconditioned truth and particular conditions of philosophical thought.

In contrast to Hegel's concept-metaphysics and his concept-based notion of philosophy, essentialisms either disconnect particular thinkers from

universal truth in principle (Hegel's Aristotle), thus rendering philosophical knowledge impossible, or they undermine particular thinkers' ontological status and their autonomy along with it when they absorb them in truth's (ultimately self-undermining) abstract universality (Hegel's Spinoza), thus depriving philosophical knowledge of content. To Hegel, both of these approaches undermine the difference between truthful thought and error. Either no particular thought lives up to universal truth so that all particular thinking is error and ignorance in the face of truth's universality (Hegel's Aristotle), or, every – and thus no – particular thought embodies universality's self-reference: every particular thought is as is must be in virtue of its participation in truth's all-encompassing, all-determining and undetermined universality. All 'particular' thought – and thus none – is ultimately equally universal. And since this universality is self-undermining, no philosophical thought can express any content, thus rendering philosophical knowledge empty and turning it into ignorance: philosophy becomes knowledge of no determinacy and thus ignorance of determinacy (cf. Hegel's Spinoza).

In contrast, Hegel's concept-based account of philosophical thought determines the particularity of finite thinkers as an aspect of universal truth's self-reference. From an empirically informed perspective, the particularity of thinkers' thought is either truth in particular form or mere particularity so that philosophers can get it philosophically wrong as much as they can get it right. They neither dogmatically – and thus without concept-based method and deduction – assume that they are right nor do they skeptically assume that they cannot be right. And when their constructively self-critical thought gets it right, their knowledge is structured in accordance with the demands of the concept's difference-accommodating, self-identical individuality.

Conclusion

Hegel's concept-based account of philosophy is designed to integrate idealist insights into the irreducibility of difference-constituting particularity with an essentialist-naturalist notion of universality's self-referentiality. Grounding his account of philosophy in the concept enables Hegel to argue that philosophy (1) represents self-comprehending, unconditioned truth in a way that ensures the particular philosopher's self-determination, (2) deduces its categorial contents from a single principle, (3) ensures the unconditional validity of philosophy and thus itself and (4) relates the notion of an unconditioned truth that is articulated by particular thinkers in particular, empirical conditions.

To Hegel's mind, the validity of his account of philosophy thus depends on the truthfulness of his account of the concept. Should Hegel be correct and the concept, its deduction and his account of concept-based, absolute *Geist's* 'philosophy' are themselves part of philosophy, the ultimate arbiter on the concept's validity is the concept itself, which

includes those individual thinkers who decide to channel it successfully. Confronted with this circularity, interpreters of Hegel could either demonstrate that and why this view is misguided or not. And even if they find it to be correct, the question remains whether the categories and conceptual transitions that Hegel outlines in the *Encyclopedia* indeed describe concept-based *Geist's* philosophical self-thinking and thus the eternal truth whose contemplation Aristotle describes as the pinnacle of human bliss.

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